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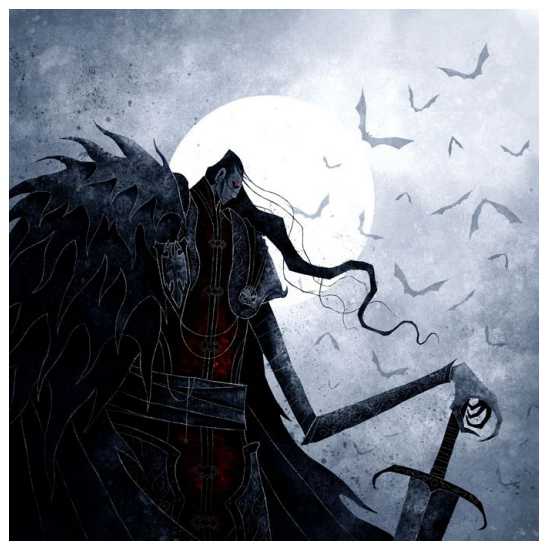
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ISSUE 34



Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 34

Art Director Daniel Ketchum argues that Halloween is the holiday that keeps on giving (candy for dinner!) any time of year.



Imagining The Ampersand: Harry Conway

Binging vampire flicks helps The Great Dalmuti artist prepare for a D&D legend.



2020 Gift Guide

Pamper the favorite adventurers



In The Works

Join our tour of the hot new

in your life—or treat yourself!—with the indispensable D&D gift guide.

products coming soon to a tabletop near you, including an exclusive puzzle from Tasha's Cauldron of Everything and a Drizzt action figure.



Extra Life 2020

How you can help the amazing work of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals by playing, donating, watching, bidding, and buying



Streaming Highlights

The monster D&D launch event for Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden dominates this issue's video highlights.

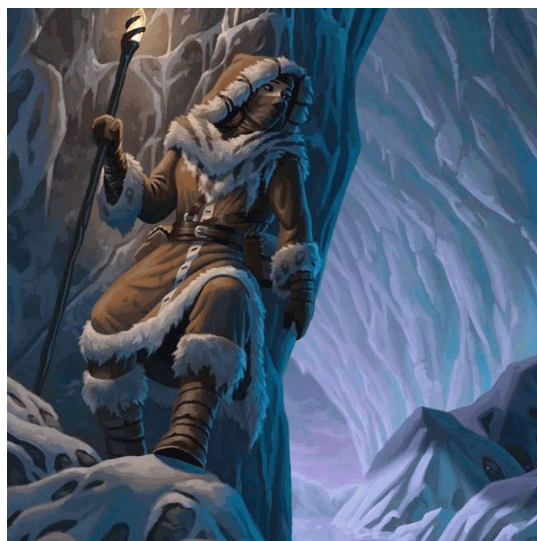


The Art of Drizzt

Artist Max Dunbar tackles another D&D icon as he captures Drizzt and Guenhwyvar in action.

Dungeons and Doggies

What's better than a spelling bee? A talking dog! Animal-loving creators April Prime and Russ Charles offer unique options for your next D&D character.

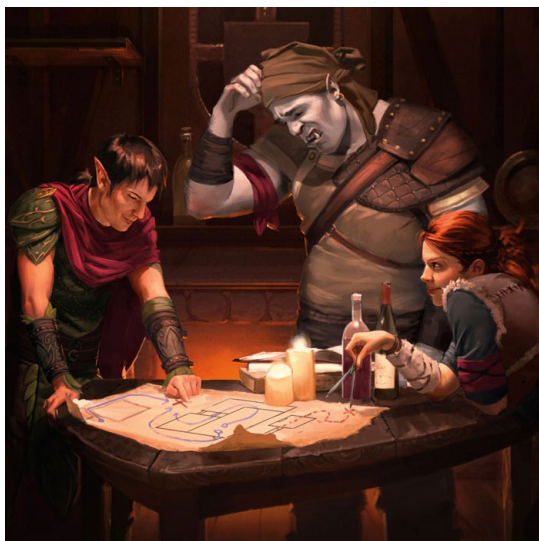


Adventure Cats and the Lost Pyramid of Hissar

Ask their owners—cats make the perfect predator. Or in this case, adventuring party. Presenting new fiction from Adam Lee, with illustrations by April Prime, bringing the cats of D&D into the game.

Solo Adventure: Frozen Offerings

Party of one? Grab yourself a sidekick and brave Icewind Dale's frozen climes in our solo adventure.



Sage Advice Compendium

The latest update to the fifth edition rules includes forty-seven new additions answering players' queries.



Make Your Monsters Scarier

Adam Lee highlights the softer side of scary as he promotes the storytelling qualities of a big (not so) bad.



D&D Classics

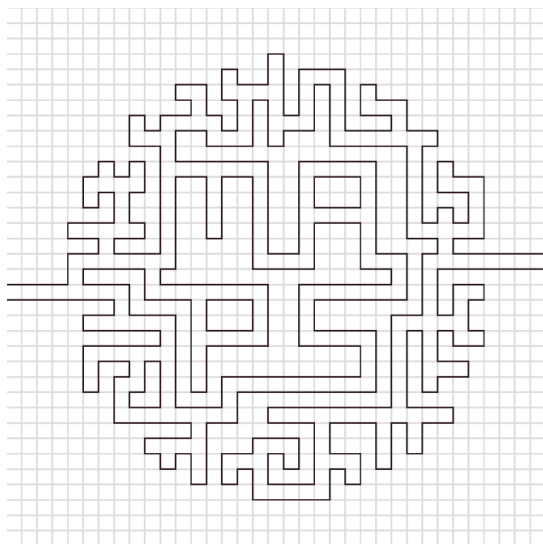
We look back at decidedly curious undead within the game—or more specifically, within a jar within the game.



The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Highlighting puzzles and artifacts in celebration of Tasha's

upcoming fifth edition
companion.



Maps of the Month: Rime of the Frostmaiden and Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl

As we head into the wintry
dangers of Icewind Dale, we
explore maps of snow and ice.

Fiction: Ice Out

Greg Tito treats us to a suitably
chilling tale from Icewind Dale.



Brandy Camel

Our new introduction to members of the D&D Team and their roles begins with the Community Lead.

Next Issue: Dragon+ 35

Deck the halls! Expect gifts galore when we return in December...



A big thank you to all the staff at Children's Miracle Network Hospitals!

DRAGON+ 34

Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 34

Art Director Daniel Ketchum argues that Halloween is the holiday that keeps on giving (candy for dinner!) any time of year.

S oooooo, I'll start with a confession: What you're currently reading is actually the *fourth* incarnation of this letter.

When I agreed to pen this opening for the October issue of *Dragon+*, I figured it would be a walk in the park. I mean, when someone says, "October issue," I'm sure I'm not the only person who immediately thinks Halloween—a widely observed holiday marked by frivolity, outlandish costumes, and free candy! It's an occasion that surely lends a wealth of inspiration to a welcome letter!



Daniel Ketchum

But each time I set out in a direction—be it writing about how all Necco wafers that exist now must have been manufactured in the 1940's (when all of the sugar that should be in them would have gone to the war effort) or writing about the last time I wore a Halloween costume (it was 2009... and may the pictures never surface)—it just sounded hollow to me.

I've been fortunate enough to make a career of playing in made-up worlds, (I spent eleven years in the Marvel Universe before finding my way to the Forgotten Realms, where I currently serve as an art director on the Wizards Franchise Development Team!), but

somehow it felt out of touch to talk about Halloween this year without acknowledging the reality of the world we're currently living in.

To that end, I decided to jot down a few random thoughts I've had about celebrating Halloween as we c-r-a-w-l our way through this global pandemic:

- Do Halloween masks count as legit face coverings? Obviously, a Hannibal Lecter mask isn't going to get the job done, but if you're Michael Meyers for Halloween, you're good to go, right? [Editor's Note: Nope! But hey, there are still **options!**]
- It seems like the pandemic has stripped us of the cultural touchpoints we rely upon to celebrate life—birthday parties, graduation ceremonies, weddings. But as my brilliant colleague A.J. pointed out, anything we can do to mark the passage of time during the pandemic will help us maintain our sanity and feel more normal. While there are certainly some Halloween activities that should be off the table in 2020 (do *not* go bobbing for apples!), I wonder how we can preserve at least some of the traditions that will make it feel like October 31 happened? Carving jack o'lanterns seems more than doable and I'm sure there's a version of trick or treating that **complies with social distancing mandates**. And while I'm not one to don a costume, I'm sure there will be many a Halloween costume contest hosted on Zoom this year. If you invite me, I will happily come guest judge at yours! (Bonus points to anyone whose costume references Drizzt and the Companions or *Schitt's Creek*. Or better yet, both! E.g. "Eww, Bruenor.")
- That said, for those of you who are unable to participate in Halloween this year for one reason or another, take solace in this: Unlike some holidays, Halloween can be celebrated *any* time of year when you're an adult! I mean, think about it: does it really need to be October 31 for you to eat a giant bag of candy for dinner? Horror is a movie genre that plays year round, whereas I definitely got some weird looks for wanting to watch *A Bad Moms Christmas* at a virtual movie night this past summer. (It is *not* a hot take to say that Christine Baranski is divine *any* time of year!) And best of all, you can wear a costume any day you want, which is *especially* true when you're working from home. (To follow that

up: True story, one time I was walking down the hall at Wizards, and I saw one of my coworkers was dressed as an old-timey riverboat captain. Just on some random Tuesday! It was *the best!*)

- The world is a *heavy* place right now, but it's for this reason that I believe we need games like Dungeons & Dragons more than ever. Not only do we get to try on new identities and see the world from other perspectives, but we can learn to be the people we aspire to be in times of adversity. I'm currently playing in a campaign with neighbors I only just met as we've all been stuck in our apartment building during the pandemic. I'm rolling a half-elf bard named Erastus Cortano, a stand-up comedian who can find the lighter side of *any* situation and always has a quip at the ready. Let me tell you, as this pandemic drags on, Daniel Ketchum is learning a *lot* from Erastus!
- And finally, a reminder that this Halloween might not be the year to throw away your toilet paper on somebody else's tree. Just saying. (See! That was totally an Erastus Cortano move, as much of this entire article has been.)

Anyway, I wish you all a happy and safe October! And November! Mark the passage of time however you can. And please, be kind to each other, take care of each other, and stay safe out there!

Daniel Ketchum

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CHART A COURSE IN THE WILDS



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Imagining The Ampersand: Harry Conway

Binging vampire flicks helps The Great Dalmuti artist prepare for a D&D legend.

by Matt Chapman

“When I got the brief that I was going to be bringing vampire villain Strahd to life I was over the moon because that couldn’t be more fitting for my style,” says illustrator and artist Harry Conway, who recently brought a D&D touch to the classic card game *The Great Dalmuti*. “I love immersing myself in a subject, and to help capture the creepy vibe of Strahd’s world I watched so many Dracula movies! It’s been really good fun.”

Conway’s unique perspective is serving double duty for this issue of *Dragon+*. Not only does his image of Count Strahd von Zarovich celebrate the rerelease of *The Curse of Strahd Revamped* (and *Beadle & Grimm’s Curse of Strahd Legendary Edition*), it also casts the

perfect spell for this time of year.

“This being the October issue and with vampires and bats being so symbolic of Halloween, it all ties together,” he explains. “I needed to keep the background as minimal as possible so as not to take too much focus away from Strahd himself. But by placing a bright moon behind him I’m able to emphasize his silhouette in a dramatic way that’s often used with characters like Batman, while also providing that spooky Halloween feel.”

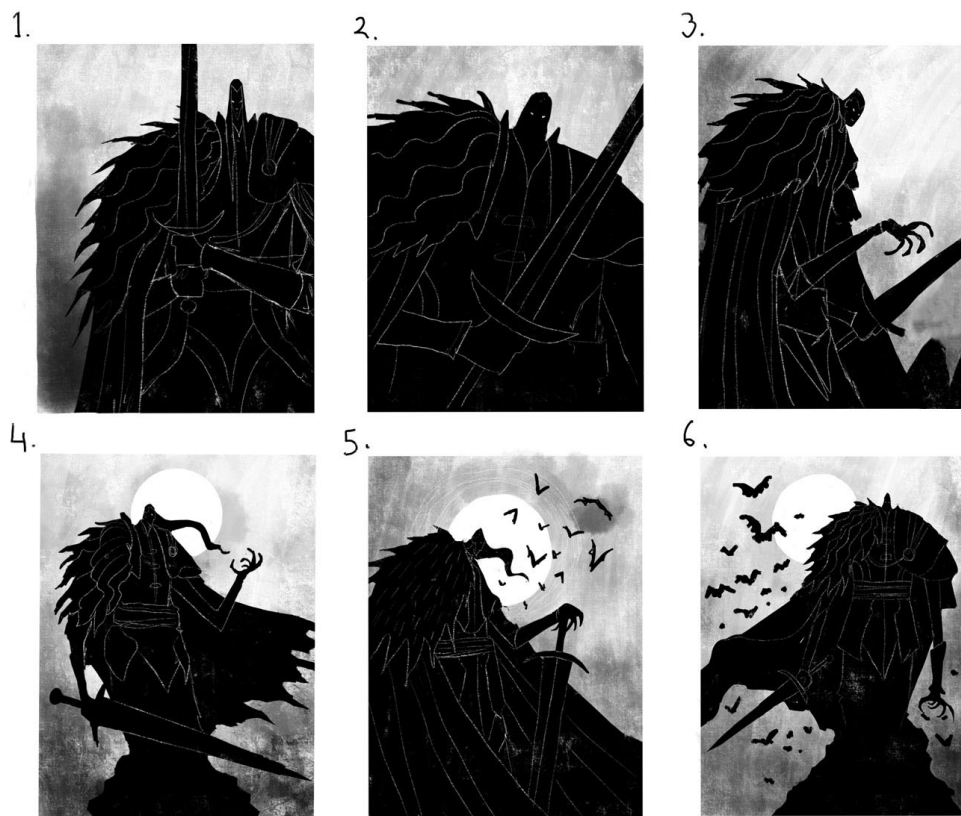
Movies featuring dapper undead may have provided hours of inspiration for Conway’s cover image, but Strahd’s outfit was based on existing representations of the character from Dungeons & Dragons lore. Art Director Daniel Ketchum provided visual references that hinted at the character’s upbringing and family background.

“I was really drawn to the way Strahd looks. He’s not like Dracula, wearing a tuxedo. He has a warrior general spirit that I love and that helps to lock in a sense of his long history. He comes from a very noble family and a lot has happened in his life,” Conway says.

“There’s an elegance to him but also a very present danger, and I needed to get that intricate detail into his armor to get that across. As part of that, I’ve hidden the ampersand as a small detail on his armor. I liked the idea of it being incorporated there almost like the seal of his overall dress. I also didn’t want to make it too easy to spot. It should be challenging and not too obvious for *Dragon+* readers.”

Given his extensive research, does Conway have any recommendations when it comes to onscreen vampires?

“Claes Bang was really cool as Count Dracula in the BBC’s version of *Dracula* shown at Christmas. I love the episode where they’re on the ship, *The Demeter*, as it had a whodunnit feel to it. I also rewatched Francis Ford Coppola’s *Dracula* from the ’90s, with Keanu Reeves. It’s still quite fun but it’s very much a film of its time, let’s put it that way. And I almost went to *Twilight* but that wasn’t the kind of vampires we were looking for.”



Sketches (select to view)

You produced a set of six thumbnail images for the *Dragon+* team to choose from. What was your thinking behind each of those?

The first thing I did was research the character and get to know Strahd's backstory to find out what he's about. The easiest way to tackle a big baddie is to show them in the most scary and terrifying way imaginable. But I wanted to approach Strahd from the point of view that he's a lonely figure. I always feel that villains weren't always as bad as they turn out and when you look at Strahd's backstory, it's very sad. The idea that I was trying to get across was a sense of isolation.

I started each thumbnail with a strong silhouette using loose sketch line work. Some were experimental as I was playing with the composition. There's so much weight and emphasis that can be added to a story using good composition. It's really important for me to nail down the shape first and everything else can fall into place once you have that foundation. Daniel [Ketchum, Art Director] thought the fifth thumbnail had that sense of creepy sorrowfulness about it so we

honed in on that.

Strahd's tragic backstory definitely raises him above the kind of one-note movie villains that look cool but have no substance...

Exactly. Those villains that cackle for no reason and deliver their monologue are just the bad guy and nothing more. Whereas Strahd comes from a place of real tragedy. They're doing bad things at the end of the day but if you can get the audience to empathize with them, that's when you know you have a really good bad guy.

The bats add an excellent touch to the scene. Had you drawn them before?

That was a first for me. Again, it was really all about getting the silhouette right. When you see a bat, what's its shape? And what do its wings look like? Some of the things I drew worked really well and some didn't, which took a bit of patience. It was fun because it was a new challenge and something to experiment with but it was surprisingly more complicated than I thought it was going to be. I'm very happy with how they turned out in the end.

Are you working digitally?

These days I mainly work on tablets, using Procreate and Photoshop. I used to create a lot of my backgrounds using traditional watercolors or pen and ink. But I can also be a little impatient to get started on a canvas and if you make a mistake it can take three hours to correct. Transitioning to digital media was the right thing to do because it gave me the opportunity to experiment. I'm sure I'm not the first artist to tell you that the undo button is a lifesaver! I do miss aspects of traditional art so I will pick up a pencil every now and then. It's important to keep a foot in both camps.

Were you able to experiment with the bats?

I placed Strahd in the foreground so he's dominating the picture and I put the bats on a separate layer. The bats were much more of a solid black in early versions. Because I work digitally, I was able to lower their opacity and add a little light so they're not too dominating in the background.

Were you always destined to be an artist from an early age?

I was fortunate to grow up in a very creative family surrounded by people making things. My parents were designers in theatre and film

—my mom was a costume designer—and I have two older brothers, one of whom worked in comics before transitioning to screenwriting. In primary school when it got to a point where they ask you what you want to be when you grow up, everyone else seemed to think I'd be an artist. But I didn't know you could pursue art or illustration as a career choice.

I always knew I would dedicate my life to something creative. For a long time, I wanted to be an actor because I love film and I felt that art was very much a hobby I did to unwind. It's hilarious that I saw acting as my fallback career because that's also an incredibly difficult industry to break into. If you had told the younger me that I was going to be drawing and making a living out of it, I'd have told you to shut up and stop making fun of me.

How would you describe your art style?

It's very texture heavy with lots of grunge and gris and stark contrasting colors. It's also very silhouette heavy and I love building characters or any kind of visual using shape. I suppose it goes against what a lot of people are taught at art school but I like using black and white with maybe just a little bit of red. My lecturers were constantly trying to get me to expand my color palette but I've always been a big fan of rich, heavy textures.

When did you develop the unusual perspective used to create your characters?

You're encouraged to create art in a certain way and my characters used to look more in proportion and less eerie and weird. It can be daunting to go against that. But I reached a point where I wasn't having fun with art anymore and when it becomes a chore to sit down and draw, that's a red flag. Then there was a shift in my art style to something darker and more saturated. I knew that I was doing something closer to my own voice and that was really important.

I don't know where the unusual perspective originally stems from. Prior to this style everything I drew had to be absolutely precise and anatomically correct. When I realized I needed to change what I was doing to make art fun again, my characters started getting weird, spindly limbs and tiny heads. Being playful with those proportions and bending the rules made me realize that art doesn't have to look a certain way and the work I was creating felt more authentic. As long

as art makes sense and doesn't visually make people's eyes bleed, you're on the right path. I'm happy with it but people do ask, 'Why do you make the head so small?'

You can see more of Harry Conway's work on his [official website](#) and connect with him on [Instagram](#). *The Great Dalmuti: Dungeons & Dragons* is available now with an MSRP of \$14.99 and *Curse of Strahd Revamped* is also out now with an MSRP of \$99.99.



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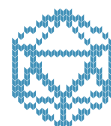
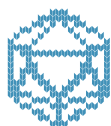
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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2020 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

NORTH AMERICA

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Cozy blanket (for my Icewind Dale buddies)

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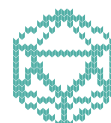
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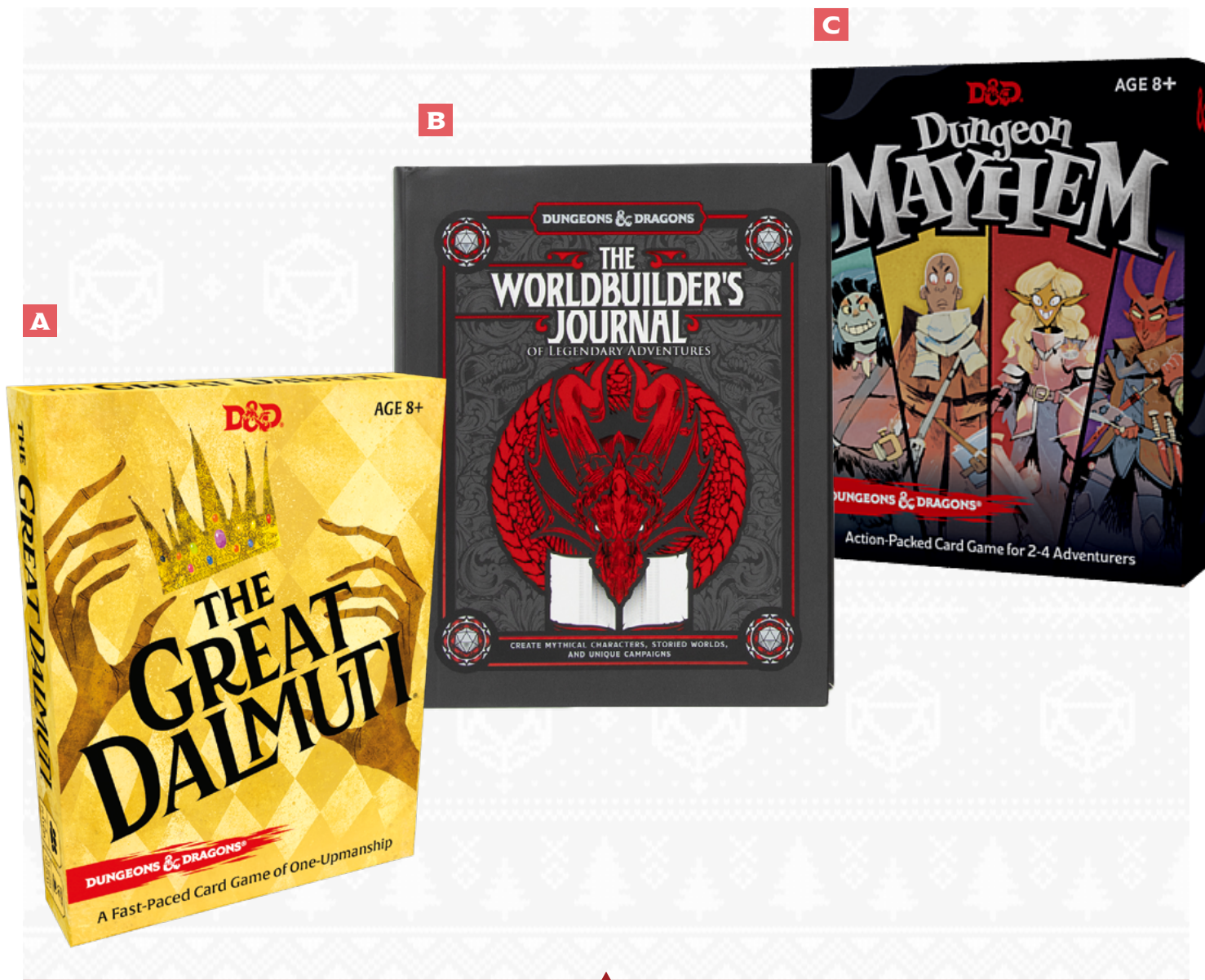
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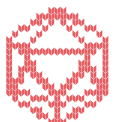
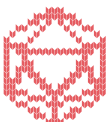




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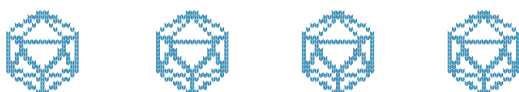
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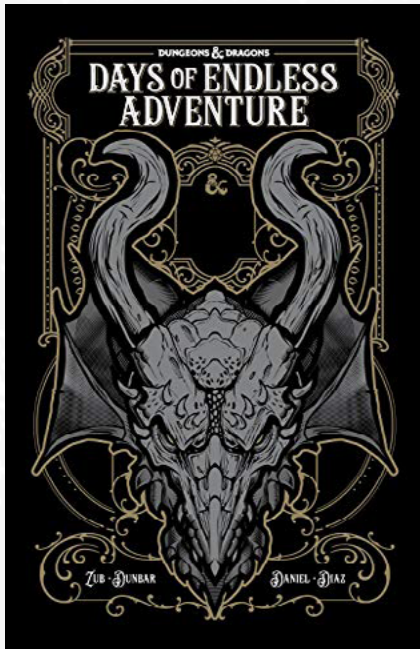
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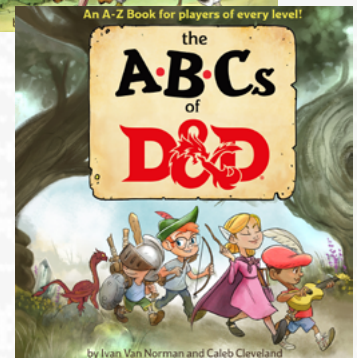
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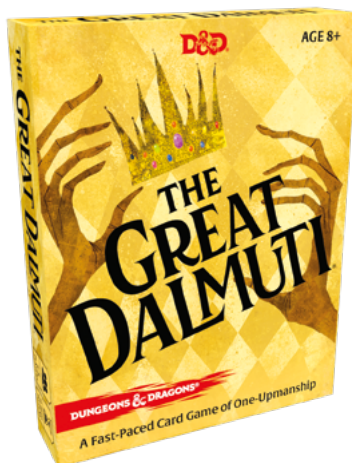
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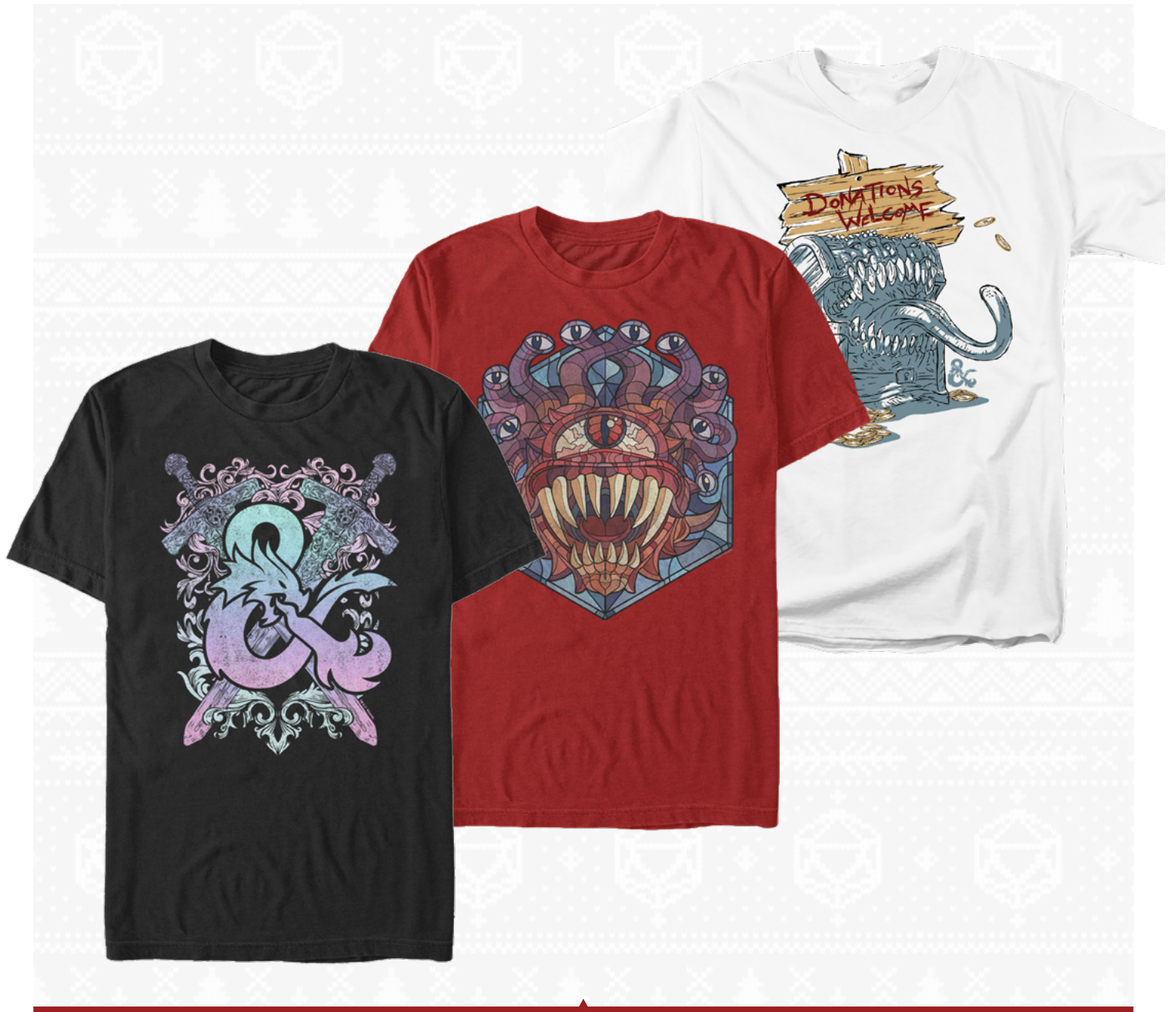
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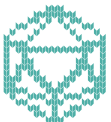




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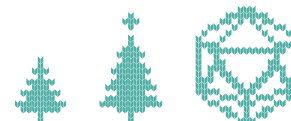
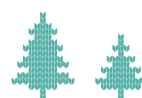
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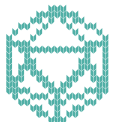
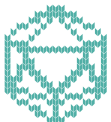
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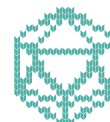
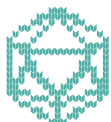
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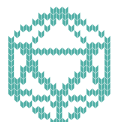




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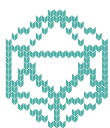
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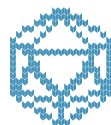


DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

2020 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

UNITED KINGDOM

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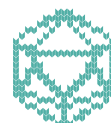
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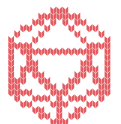
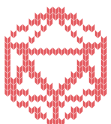




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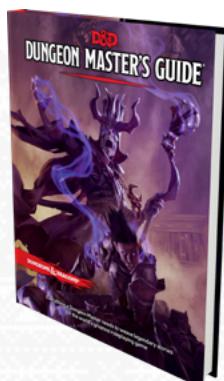


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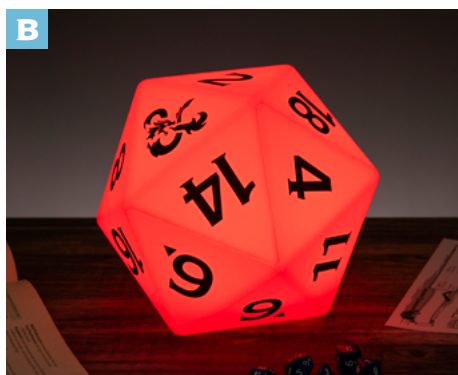


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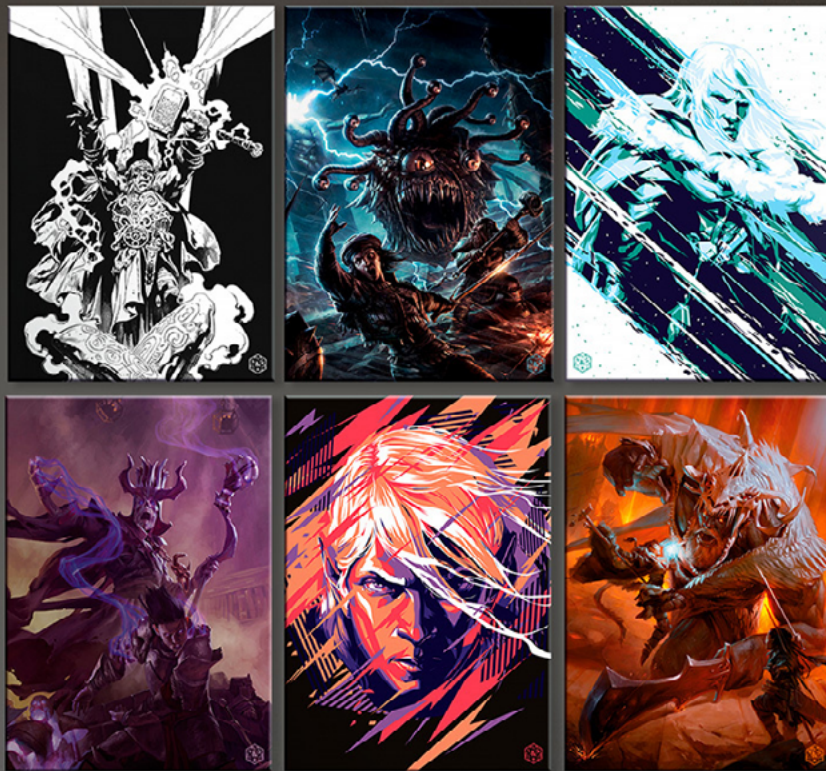
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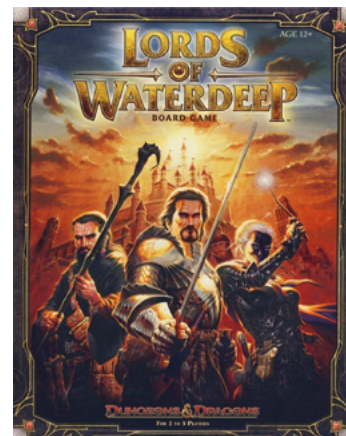




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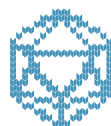
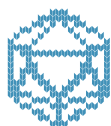


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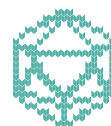
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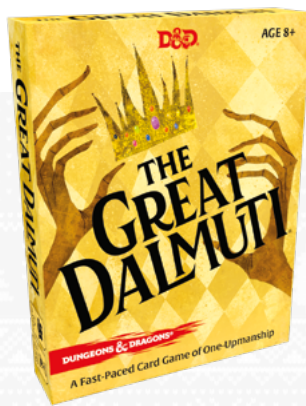
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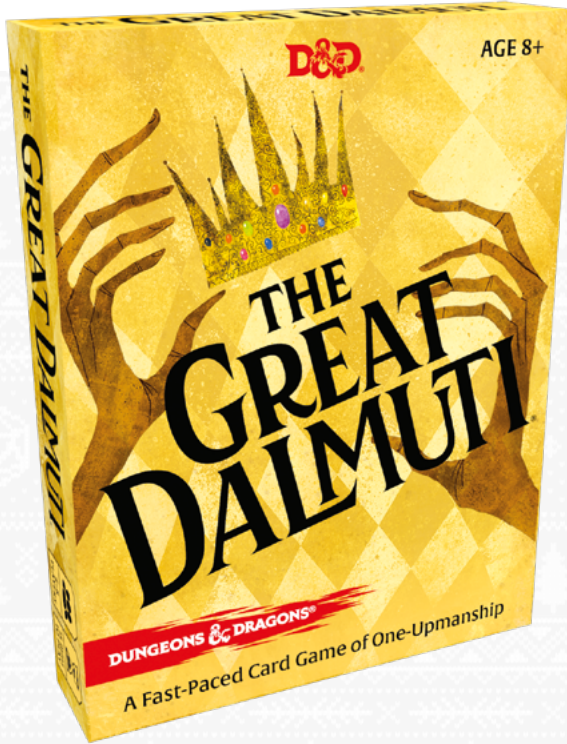
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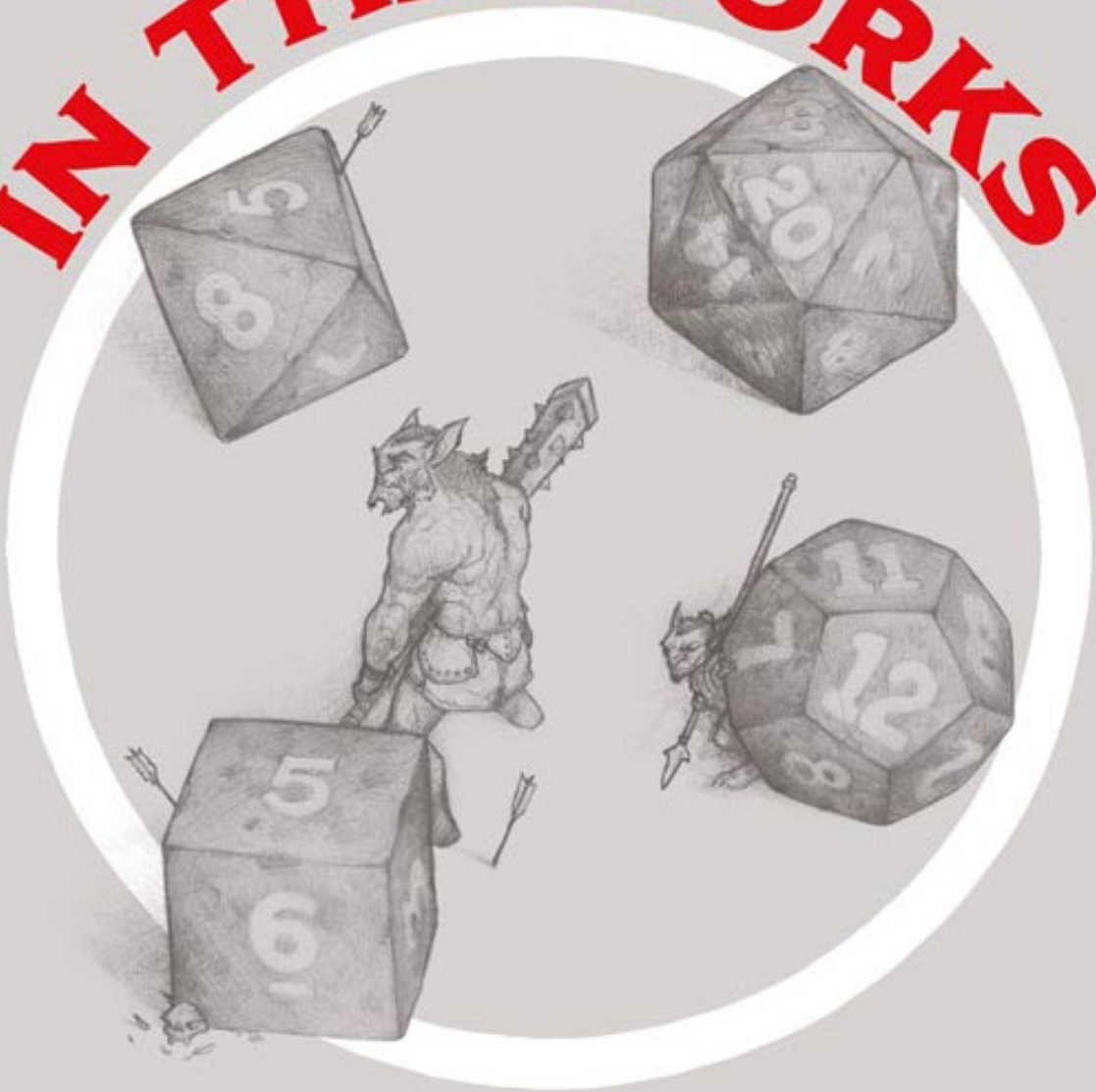
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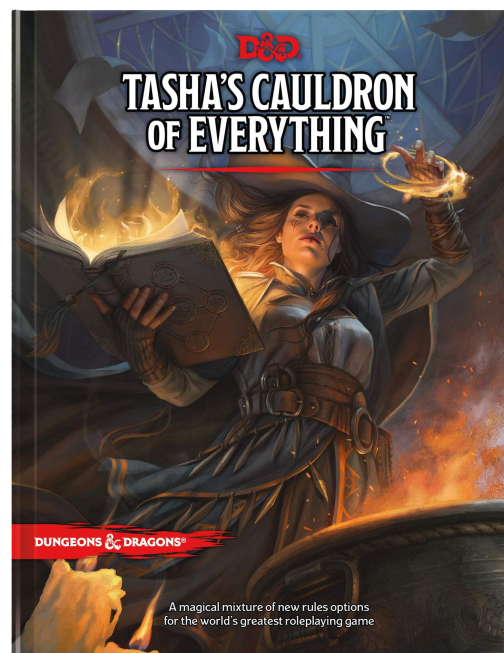
IN THE WORKS



Tasha's Cauldron of Everything

by Matt Chapman

Jeremy Crawford **describes** **superstar spellslinger Tasha** as “one of the most storied characters in the D&D multiverse” and we’ll shortly get a taste of what she’s been cooking up when *Tasha’s Cauldron of Everything* releases in November. Alongside expanded rules for character origins, subclasses, sidekicks, group patrons, artifacts, and more, she’ll also be dishing up some incredible puzzles for DMs to drop into their games.



(Select to view)

When it came time to select the human bard best suited to translate Tasha’s terrific teasers into book form, Elisa Teague was top of the list. Having previously worked on *The Maze of Games* (an interactive *Endless Quest*-style book where readers solve puzzles in order to know which page to turn to next), she has also designed escape rooms, written puzzles for the Adventurers League, and created puzzle-heavy competitive D&D Epics for Gary Con.

“The D&D Team was very familiar with my puzzle work. I’ve been playing Dungeons & Dragons for 30 years and have always incorporated puzzles into my own adventures, having grown up with

a DM who always used them in his games,” Teague tells *Dragon+*.

“I previously had an idea for a puzzle book where Dungeon Masters could drag and drop them into an adventure. Perhaps you’re a DM and you need a puzzle that fits well in a music room, for example. You could check the index and turn to the page to find a music-based puzzle. We then re-envisioned the idea of making a standalone puzzle book and included a lot of that great content into *Tasha’s Cauldron of Everything*.”

ANATOMY OF A PUZZLE

Thirteen puzzles have been included in Tasha’s upcoming tome, catering to a variety of different environments. These can be dropped into an adventure as written or easily adapted to suit any game.

“It’s better if a puzzle can fit seamlessly into the story you’re telling. It shouldn’t feel jarring or take the players out of the game, so we included advice on how to adjust our puzzles to fit any scenario you want,” Teague advises.

“For example, we might have a puzzle that uses books on a bookshelf but there’s no reason that same puzzle couldn’t use rocks in the field, chiseled with the relevant symbols. We also talk about how to adjust the puzzle for experience, difficulty, and to make it part of your world. It’s a great way for DMs to see a breakdown of how puzzles are written and get them thinking.”

There are a few rules Teague follows when designing puzzles: they must match the D&D setting; a team should be able to solve them; and the characters’ skills and knowledge can also come into play.

“If you’re an adventuring party making your way through a dungeon, you’re unlikely to happen upon a puzzle asking about pop culture celebrities in the modern world. My puzzles are very in-world and they take a party of characters, not just players, to solve,” she reveals.

“While I have included a couple of riddles in *Tasha’s Cauldron of Everything*, a puzzle cannot simply be an abstract riddle where the answer might be a shot in the dark. A lot of people also think that traps are puzzles. But traps are usually just traps.

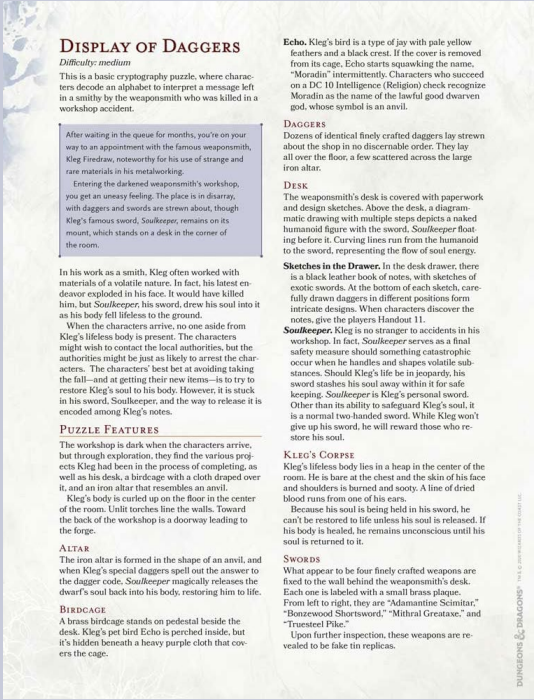
“I also make puzzles which allow players who aren’t great at solving

puzzles—or don’t believe that they’re great at solving puzzles—to use their character knowledge to find the solution. Perhaps they’re a dwarf barbarian whose heritage allows them to recognize the stone cutting patterns in a hall to make a History skill check and get a hint from the DM.”

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SOLVING THE UNSOLVABLE

“Whenever a Dungeon Master sees players starting to fold their arms, pick up their cell phone, or get visibly frustrated, those signals mean the players are starting to tune out of the game. No matter what’s happening in the game at that point, those cues usually mean it’s time to cut this short and move on. I don’t want my puzzles to act as roadblocks so they are never unsolvable. If all of the DM hints can’t help the party get past that roadblock, it’s time for another tactic,” Teague says, explaining that it’s better to shift gears than simply hand the players the solution to a puzzle.

“A puzzle turns into combat in a very natural way. After five or six attempts at trying to rearrange little carved statues into a specific

order, maybe spirits come out of them and attack. If the characters destroy all of those spirits, the door opens and they can get through that way. Or perhaps a monster bursts through the door they're trying to open and creates the opening for them. Now they have to deal with that monster to keep going, which alleviates the frustration."

In the end, Teague feels it's a question of balance. A good DM can read the table and know when players have reached the end of the road with a particular challenge.

"It's as rewarding for players to have that 'Aha!' moment as they solve something as it is for DMs to see that look on their faces as they solve it. If you overdo it with the hints you might remove their satisfaction at solving a puzzle. You also shouldn't take that feeling away from them by simply giving them the answer. But D&D is most fun when it's moving forward so giving them another way out adds the right balance."

***Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* is released November 17, 2020 with an MSRP of \$49.99 and is available to **preorder now**.**

D&D CELEBRATION 2020

"I co-wrote the storyline for *The Stream of Many Eyes* two years ago, including the live-action game where the cast solved puzzles as they were led around the set by DM Ivan Norman," Elisa Teague tells *Dragon+*. "Although this year's *D&D Live 2020* event was unfortunately unable to go ahead in-person as planned, we replaced it with an online version that included a cool reality-type game show. Our RP event saw thousands of people solving puzzles embedded in the map of the Ten-Towns on the *D&D Live* website, as they tried to find the guilty party responsible for the silos going up in flames.

"We decided to revisit the intrigue of those puzzles for *D&D Celebration 2020*, embedding six brand-new puzzles into that map of the Ten-Towns. As well as getting to learn a little bit more about Icewind Dale, it gave players another level of engagement while they were waiting to watch a panel or for their Adventurers League game to start. And those who solved the puzzles were

rewarded with digital treats, including wallpapers, Adventurers League certificates, and a sneak peek at two new spells appearing in *Tasha’s Cauldron of Everything!*”



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DISPLAY OF DAGGERS

Difficulty: medium

This is a basic cryptography puzzle, where characters decode an alphabet to interpret a message left in a smithy by the weaponsmith who was killed in a workshop accident.

After waiting in the queue for months, you're on your way to an appointment with the famous weaponsmith, Kleg Firedraw, noteworthy for his use of strange and rare materials in his metalworking.

Entering the darkened weaponsmith's workshop, you get an uneasy feeling. The place is in disarray, with daggers and swords strewn about, though Kleg's famous sword, *Soulkeeper*, remains on its mount, which stands on a desk in the corner of the room.

In his work as a smith, Kleg often worked with materials of a volatile nature. In fact, his latest endeavor exploded in his face. It would have killed him, but *Soulkeeper*, his sword, drew his soul into it as his body fell lifeless to the ground.

When the characters arrive, no one aside from Kleg's lifeless body is present. The characters might wish to contact the local authorities, but the authorities might be just as likely to arrest the characters. The characters' best bet at avoiding taking the fall—and at getting their new items—is to try to restore Kleg's soul to his body. However, it is stuck in his sword, *Soulkeeper*, and the way to release it is encoded among Kleg's notes.

PUZZLE FEATURES

The workshop is dark when the characters arrive, but through exploration, they find the various projects Kleg had been in the process of completing, as well as his desk, a birdcage with a cloth draped over it, and an iron altar that resembles an anvil.

Kleg's body is curled up on the floor in the center of the room. Unlit torches line the walls. Toward the back of the workshop is a doorway leading to the forge.

ALTAR

The iron altar is formed in the shape of an anvil, and when Kleg's special daggers spell out the answer to the dagger code, *Soulkeeper* magically releases the dwarf's soul back into his body, restoring him to life.

BIRDCAGE

A brass birdcage stands on pedestal beside the desk. Kleg's pet bird Echo is perched inside, but it's hidden beneath a heavy purple cloth that covers the cage.

Echo. Kleg's bird is a type of jay with pale yellow feathers and a black crest. If the cover is removed from its cage, Echo starts squawking the name, "Moradin" intermittently. Characters who succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check recognize Moradin as the name of the lawful good dwarven god, whose symbol is an anvil.

DAGGERS

Dozens of identical finely crafted daggers lay strewn about the shop in no discernable order. They lay all over the floor, a few scattered across the large iron altar.

DESK

The weaponsmith's desk is covered with paperwork and design sketches. Above the desk, a diagrammatic drawing with multiple steps depicts a naked humanoid figure with the sword, *Soulkeeper* floating before it. Curving lines run from the humanoid to the sword, representing the flow of soul energy.

Sketches in the Drawer. In the desk drawer, there is a black leather book of notes, with sketches of exotic swords. At the bottom of each sketch, carefully drawn daggers in different positions form intricate designs. When characters discover the notes, give the players Handout 11.

Soulkeeper. Kleg is no stranger to accidents in his workshop. In fact, *Soulkeeper* serves as a final safety measure should something catastrophic occur when he handles and shapes volatile substances. Should Kleg's life be in jeopardy, his sword stashes his soul away within it for safe keeping. *Soulkeeper* is Kleg's personal sword. Other than its ability to safeguard Kleg's soul, it is a normal two-handed sword. While Kleg won't give up his sword, he will reward those who restore his soul.

KLEG'S CORPSE

Kleg's lifeless body lies in a heap in the center of the room. He is bare at the chest and the skin of his face and shoulders is burned and sooty. A line of dried blood runs from one of his ears.

Because his soul is being held in his sword, he can't be restored to life unless his soul is released. If his body is healed, he remains unconscious until his soul is returned to it.

SWORDS

What appear to be four finely crafted weapons are fixed to the wall behind the weaponsmith's desk. Each one is labeled with a small brass plaque. From left to right, they are "Adamantine Scimitar," "Bonzewood Shortsword," "Mithral Greataxe," and "Truesteel Pike."

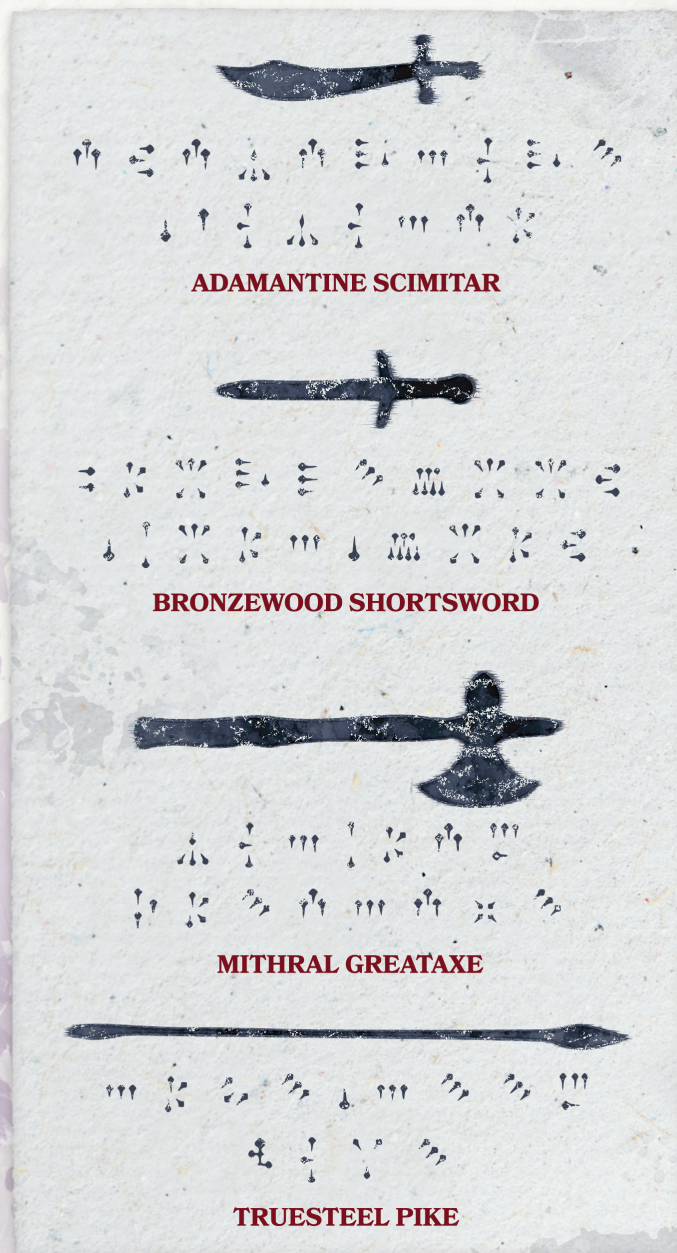
Upon further inspection, these weapons are revealed to be fake tin replicas.

THE SOLUTION

To solve this dagger code, characters must first decode the notes found in the desk drawer. Using the sketched images of the weapons and keeping in mind the rare materials that Kleg the weaponsmith is known to use, the characters must use trial and error to decode the dagger code.

Once the characters learn these letters, they should be able to recreate the word MORADIN on the altar with the daggers from all over the shop. The players can do this by writing out the dagger code on a piece of paper or by using some other prop to represent their characters interacting with the daggers.

The sketches in the notebook and the dagger translations are as follows:



Once the adventurers learn the code, they can spell out “Moradin”; the dagger code for this word is as follows. When this is done, *Soulkeeper* begins to vibrate. It swells with silvery light until at last, Kleg’s soul departs the sword and reenters his body, restoring the dwarf to 1 hit point.



HINT CHECKS

The following hints can be provided to assist with solving. If a character has proficiency with the hint’s associated skill, they receive the hint upon asking for it. If no character has proficiency with any of the hint check skills, they may roll a skill check for the hint.

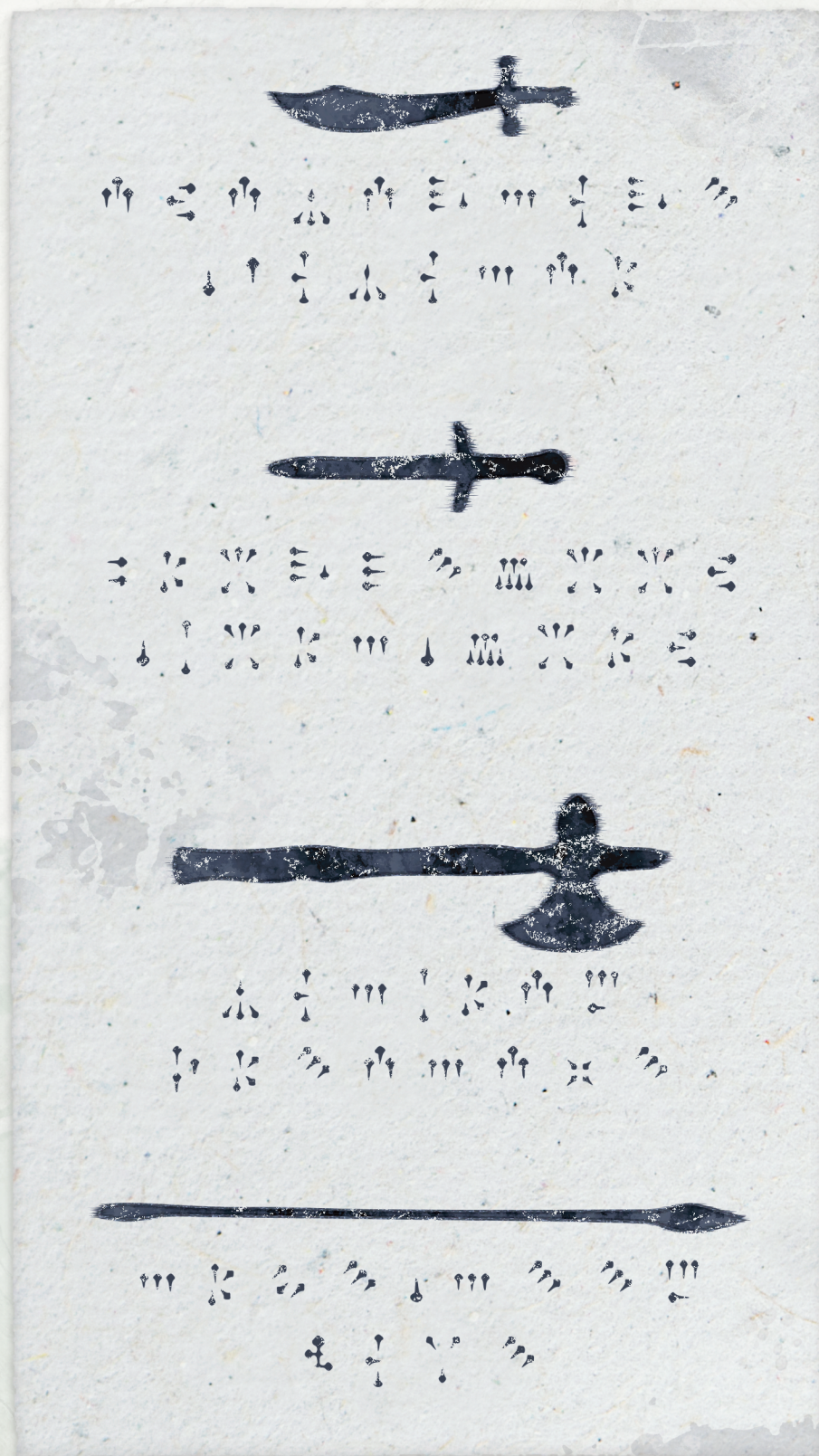
Intelligence (Nature) DC 15. If at least half of the letters of a single material in the notes (e.g. “BRONZE” in “BRONZEWOOD”) are solved, but the characters are stuck on the rest, the character remembers learning about the material and is able to fill in the rest of the letters.

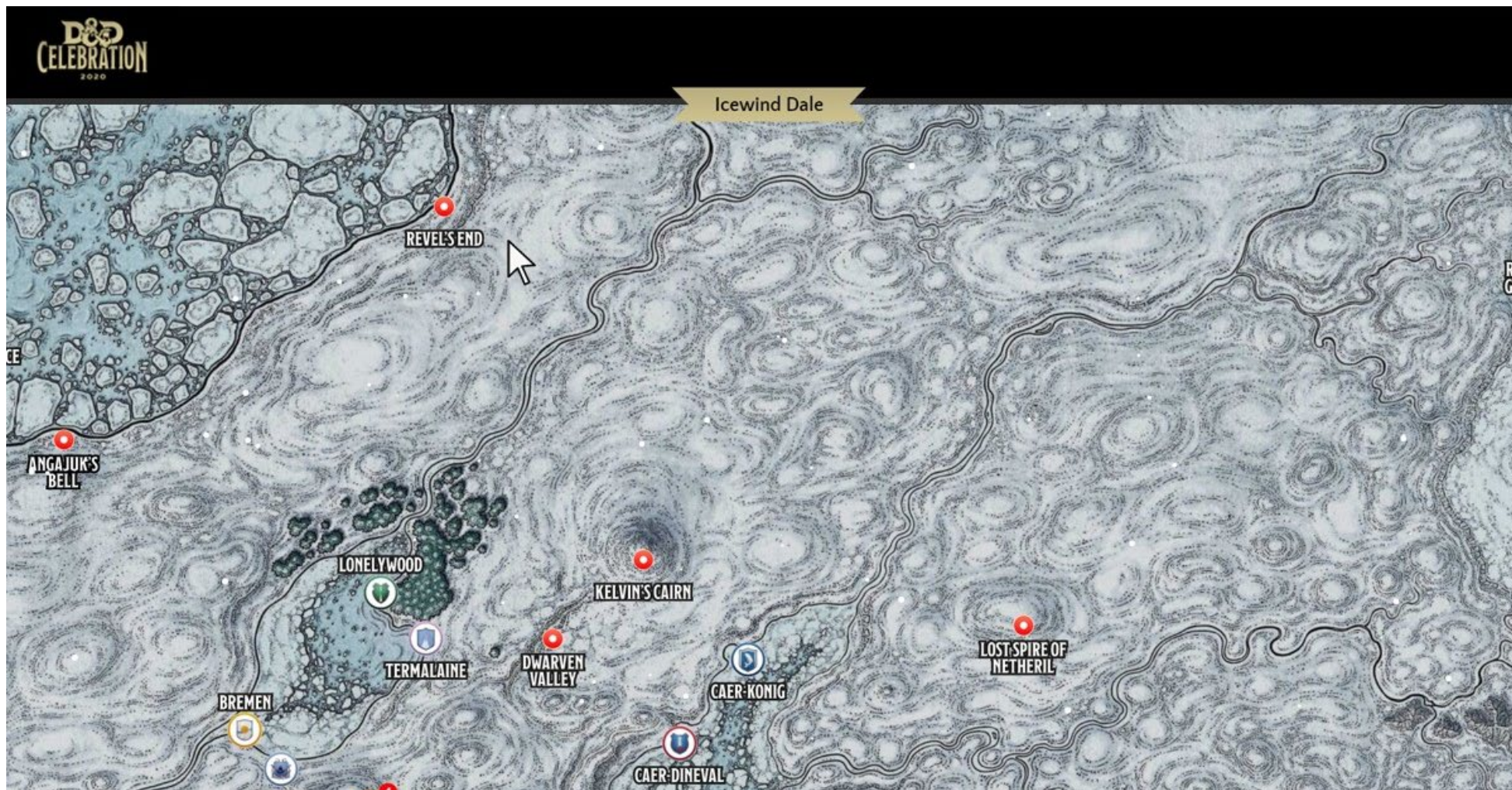
Wisdom (Perception) DC 10. The character notices the daggers in the shop look exactly like those in the notes.

CUSTOMIZING THE PUZZLE

Extend this puzzle and incorporate it more into your campaign by requiring characters to speak to other townsfolk to learn about Kleg’s background and discover he settled into this town as a weaponsmith after years of clerical service to his god, Moradin—which is how they can learn the password needed to solve the puzzle.

PUZZLE HANDOUT 1: DISPLAY OF DAGGERS





IN THE WORKS



Curse of Strahd Revamped

by Matt Chapman

“Take a trip to Barovia,” they said. “It’ll be fun,” they said. Yet instead of being the happy-go-lucky territory from the 1947 Bob Hope comedy thriller *Where There’s Life* (in which American radio announcer Michael Valentine discovers he’s the new king of Barovia), you find yourself in the perma-dusk, gothic setting of a horror yarn.

This land of ghosts, werewolves, and other fell creatures is ruled over by a lone figure wreathed in tragedy. Count Strahd von Zarovich is no ordinary vampire, however. As one of the greatest villains ever to stalk a tabletop or shimmer in the background of a Zoom call, he requires careful handling to subject a party to the correct level of fear and anguish.

“*Curse of Strahd*, as was true of the original *Ravenloft* module, revolves around a master villain. And the adventure can only last as long as that villain is present and affecting events,” explains Chris Perkins, as *Curse of Strahd Revamped* is released in its incredible new coffin-shaped box.

“One of the things that a DM needs to think about is, how do I keep the adventure going and keep



Strahd present without him
running roughshod over the party?

(Select to view)

Because Strahd is a tough customer. If a mean DM really wanted to, they could end the adventure fairly quickly by having Strahd bear down on the party too soon.”

Perkins says the trick to understanding Strahd is to recognize that he’s a canny foe who likes to play with his food. That might be out of a desire for entertainment in such a long-lived life, or it could be a more primal need to savor the terror that he instils.

“It’s a game for him. If he were to simply snap their necks while they’re sleeping, that does nothing for him emotionally. Like any true monster he needs to watch his prey suffer, behaving this way even against his own better judgement. It’s a sadistic pleasure to pass the time until the next group of adventurers shows up. And then he repeats the exact same thing again, trapped in this endless cycle of torture.”

If you’re prizing the lid off *Curse of Strahd* for the first time with this *Revamped* edition, Perkins has plenty of advice on how to play such an unusual NPC in a way that will delight (and horrify!) your players.

BUILD SUSPENSE

“You can run the adventure any way you want to—you could run a *Scooby-Doo* version of *Curse of Strahd*. But if you’re trying to remain faithful to the story, the trick is to layer on the atmosphere whenever possible. It’s got to be done subtly, but the adventure helps

carry that ball.

“Its descriptions paint a picture that fills the mind’s eye with all of this chilling gothic macabre imagery. A Dungeon Master can further that by speaking softly or slowing down moments like the creaking of a door. These simple little reinforcements of atmosphere go a long way toward luring your players in and getting them very concerned about what’s about to happen.



Box contents (select to view)

“One way of looking at it is to compare it to the way a horror movie unfolds. The threat might become known in a lot of horror stories, but there’s usually a buildup first. If the players are constantly being beaten down, traumatized by nasty letters or mentally worn down by NPCs telling them how bad Strahd is and how they’ll die if they go to the castle, it’s a form of psychological warfare.

“However, one of the keys of a good horror story is also to break that tension. You can’t constantly have that weight bearing down on them, you have to lift it occasionally so they can take in some air and relax. Then you come at them again! It’s peaks and valleys, peaks and valleys. And that’s what the humor in the adventure is for. It allows for a cathartic release of laughter that brings everyone back down to the ground so that the tension can ramp up again.

“If you make the story too tense for too long, eventually fatigue sets in. Sometimes when you watch a horror movie, you realize it’s gone wrong because it’s too relentless. Whereas a movie like *Cabin in the Woods* blends its horror with humor, to disarm you and set you up for the next horrible thing that’s going to happen.”

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

“It’s always useful as a DM to make sure that you’re well acquainted with everything that Strahd can do. Some DMs might make the mistake of not looking at his stat block beforehand, and consequently they may not play Strahd to his full effectiveness.

“For example, Strahd has lots of ways he can get away from the party. And depending on what form he takes, he can be as hard to kill as he is evasive—moving as a gas cloud through small openings so that the characters can’t follow. It’s also important to know that he’s a spellcaster in addition to his other vampire abilities. Using him as a practiced necromancer is a key element to running him successfully.

“Of course, the adventure has other layers of complexity you can add to Strahd. When he’s in his lair, he has additional options. And the Barovian setting is another interesting element because it feels as if he’s in control of everything there. Barovia doesn’t get much sunshine, so if Strahd needs to move around during the daytime, he can. He’s basically running his own prison.”

HIT AND RUN

“Strahd is powerful enough to be in the party’s face. But that’s not how he operates because he wants them to experience the horror of the situation. In *Curse of Strahd* it explains that he likes to use hit and run tactics. He swoops in, then leaves, like a phantom. He also often sends minions who embody him—such as wolves, bats, and ghouls—to further terrorize the adventurers.

“It’s the DM’s choice how that plays out. Strahd can show up as this looming specter, and then leave without ever engaging the characters in any sort of violent way. Or he might corner a character who’s been separated from the others and engage with them, either violently or not, before pulling away.

“His ultimate goal is to lure them to his castle, to reveal its horrors and torment them further. Ideally, a party would head to Ravenloft to

confront the vampire when they're feeling buffed up. But if Strahd has sent his minions and underlings to engage the characters and whittle down their resources, they may never feel as if they're at their full strength."

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

"Strahd is written to be a charismatic character, but *Dungeons & Dragons* is a game where the interpretation of him at every single tabletop could be different. Tracy Hickman, one of the creators of the original *Ravenloft* with his wife, Laura, still runs an annual game where he gets to play Strahd. When I asked him about *Curse of Strahd* and his experiences, he said that every time he runs the adventure he learns something new about the character or that Strahd changes somehow.

"Sometimes Strahd's more sympathetic, depending on how things play out. And I think that's one of the great things about the nature of vampires in general. They're a study in contradictions: they're monsters, yet they're beautiful; they're pure corruption, but there's something seductive about them.

"One of Strahd's greatest strengths is that he's a tragic character. And tragedy is born out of a good person who has taken a wrong turn. You can follow his journey and see the various points where he made bad decisions that led him to where he is now.

"It's easy to imagine a different course for Strahd and to believe that there's still a good person somewhere locked inside. Yet the tragedy that must be endured is that Strahd can never be that person again, the good person is lost forever. But player characters can sympathize with him because of that.

"Strahd is very much a victim of his own evil and caprice. He has put himself in this position and damned himself for all eternity. In a way, one of the great things about defeating Strahd is that you're ending his torment. He is as twisted by his own actions as the very realm is around him. And you're doing him a benefit by putting an end to him if you can."

PLAYER AGENCY

"Strahd's very presence causes normal people to shudder and collapse with fear. The adventurers are atypical because they're the

kind of people who pursue danger. One of the fun things about the story is that it changes based on the adventurers' actions.

“If the characters roam around Barovia, experiencing the misery that has infected this land and hearing stories of Strahd, there comes a point when they come to the conclusion themselves that they have to go to the castle. Sometimes it's early in their visit to Barovia and sometimes it's later on. But that kind of player agency is the best outcome. In a good horror story, the heroes have more agency than the villain.

“You want the characters to reach that moment when they say, ‘Okay, we’ve seen enough. Somebody has to do something and we’re ready.’ The strength of the story comes when the characters rise up of their own volition and decide now is the time we’re going to climb up to that castle and deal with that devil. And then, of course, they realize what a terrible mistake that is! They’ve just fallen into Strahd’s trap.”

PLAYER RESPONSE

“The reaction I’ve had from players has been varied. I’ve run *Curse of Strahd* very seriously and used Strahd as a dark and ominous character, deserving of caution. Typically, what happens on those occasions is that my players want to forestall any encounter with him for as long as possible. They’re terrified that he’s going to chew them up. And I like that. I also like portraying him as this tragic, damned, dark, hateful, dreadful figure whose castle is his tomb, and when you go there you know there’s a good chance that he’s going to kill you.

“By the same token, I’ve also run games at conventions that haven’t necessarily been light-hearted, but have had a very different feel to them. One of my favorite things to do is to have the characters start the game trapped in Castle Ravenloft. They wake up in Strahd’s study and their only goal is to escape the castle with their lives. That’s the setup: there’s a vampire and he’s going to eat you, unless you get out. And by the way, you have no weapons or equipment.

“It becomes an improvisational test, where the characters are grabbing candlesticks as weapons as they’re making their way through the castle, fleeing at every sign of danger. The adventure isn’t written that way, but it contains all of the tools you’ll need to customize it and make it your own.

“That’s a great set up if you’re dealing with players who have either run the adventure themselves or played through it a few times, and you want to surprise them.”

***Curse of Strahd Revamped* is on sale now with an MSRP of \$99.99.**



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IN THE WORKS



Beadle & Grimm's Curse of Strahd Legendary Edition

by Matt Chapman



(Select to view)

Beadle & Grimm's fantastical D&D boxes never fail to amaze. Stacked with goodies, their unique items take the immersion of an adventure to the next level. While **incredible maps** detailing every nook and cranny bring Castle Ravenloft even more fully to life in the company's first *Legendary Edition*, as **hilarious finger puppets** add a touch of Blinsky creativity, there was one item that stopped us dead in our tracks when we first saw it: Sidharth Chaturvedi's DM screen.

"I got into illustration after seeing Greg Manchess's amazing work and I'm actually much more comfortable doing large, complex compositions and multi-figure battle scenes than a single character portrait," the artist tells *Dragon+*, confiding that the elongated canvas he has to work with poses a unique challenge.

“A Dungeon Master’s screen is both a panorama image and four different illustrations. When players sit in front of a DM screen everyone’s going to be looking at a different aspect of it but it also has to work as a complete image. That involves a lot of sketching to begin with.”

Chaturvedi’s early sketches help define the image and also ensure that those four individual panels deliver an impressive vista when viewed in full. It’s also important for the illustrator to ensure that nothing crosses over the lines where the DM screen folds.

“It’s almost like creating the panels of a comic. You want something distinct going on in each of them but you can’t create four different illustrations all containing the same amount of action or it looks chaotic when you link them together,” he explains.

“Most of the time is spent on all that early sketching, trying to get the arrangement right. It’s usually so tricky that by the time I have a sketch that works, that’s the best option. We go back and forth on that version, working to make it as good as possible.”

REVAMPING STRAHD

The scene playing out across the DM’s screen will be familiar to any party which dares set foot in Barovia’s most storied (and well defended) structure. And while it might seem unusual that Count Strahd von Zarovich isn’t the central focus of the piece, it’s typical for this vampire aristocrat to be dominating his own panel away from the fight.

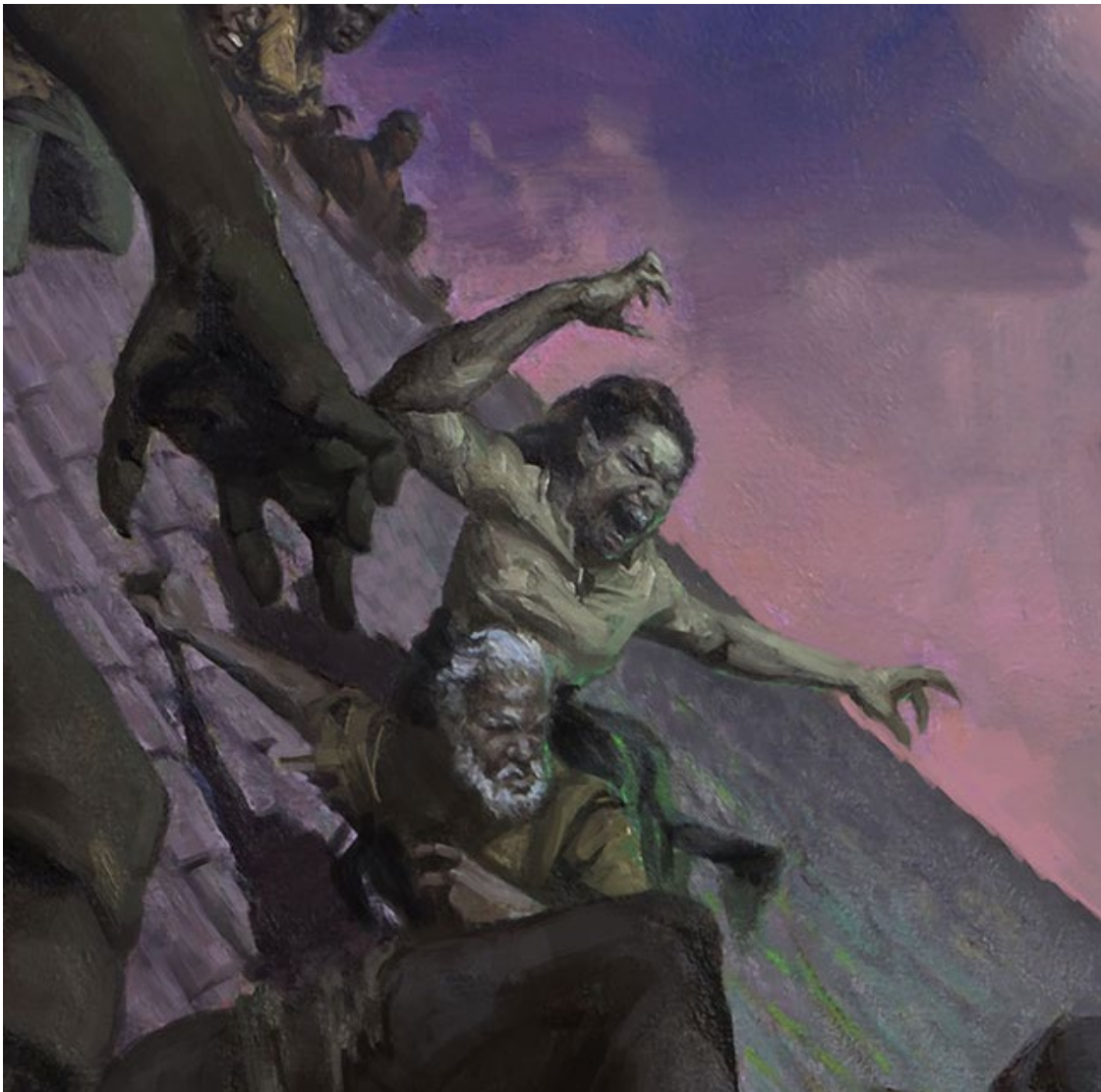
“The brief didn’t call for Strahd to be involved in this big battle, which was a worry at first because the whole set is named after him! But that fight is about the adventurers dealing with his minions on a rooftop wracked by lightning. Strahd is aloof from the whole thing, watching rather than participating. He’s holding back, letting them exhaust themselves.

“He might not be the first thing you see when you look at the whole composition, but by the time your eyes land on him you get the sense that he’s a big deal. I gave him almost a whole panel to himself, shared only with the bats and the architecture.”

Chaturvedi also had the opportunity to bring the characters caught up

in that fight to life. The Beadle & Grimm's team provided their class, race, description, weapons, and backstory, and he was given free rein to establish their visual design.

“The DM screen is commissioned very early in the process when a Beadle & Grimm's set is being put together. The sets often have fixed characters that recur throughout the art, so there will usually be illustrations featuring the same party. My visual design set the cues for these characters to ensure their look is consistent throughout.”



Vampire spawn (select to view)

FACE TIME

Dragon+ particularly enjoys the facial expressions shown by those caught up in the conflict—from the satisfied grin of the magic-user framed by a streak of red lightning, to the snarl of anger of the attacking vampire spawn. It's not surprising to learn that a real-life person often provides the reference for those.

“This is where we bring in my long-suffering fiancé, who gets to pose for them,” Chaturvedi reveals. “I’m glad she enjoys making faces. Her likeness might not be there in the image but I rely on that reference to accurately create these facial expressions, especially when they get crazy like that. She’s appeared in a lot of my work, and there’s some of me in there as well so I occasionally get to ham it up a bit. Those are really good fun to do.”

Beadle & Grimm’s *Curse of Strahd Legendary Edition* ships in early November, 2020 and is available to **preorder now for \$399 plus shipping.**

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IN THE WORKS



Drizzt & Guenhwyvar Premium Action Figure

Dragon+ was thrilled in December 2019 when it was announced that **the *Dark Alliance* video game** was in production. Wizards of the Coast's first published D&D video game will allow Drizzt Do'Urden and the other members of R.A. Salvatore's Companions of the Hall to reign destruction down on any digital foe that dares stand in their way. One unexpected bonus is that an action figure based on the famous drow warrior has also been produced, using the art from the video game as its visual reference.



(Select to view)

“Our sculpting team worked hard to recreate the look and color scheme of the figure from the upcoming *Dark Alliance* video game,” says Melissa Jones, Senior Designer at Hasbro, who collaborated with Tuque Games and Wizards of the Coast. “Since this character is an extremely active warrior, we made sure he has a full range of motion for action poses. We referenced several iconic Drizzt poses and key action moments from the video game. We wanted to capture his movement with the range of articulation, as well as adding movement to the sculpture of his flowing hair, cape, and warrior grimace as he leaps into attack.”

The sculpting team continued to draw inspiration from the *Dark Alliance* video game as it worked on a variety of accessories

designed to make the figure as cinematic as possible. These include additional heads and hands, as well as iconic, fan-favorite items such as the *Horn Charm of Mielikki* and Drizzt's scimitars *Twinkle* and *Icingdeath*.



(Select to view)

“For face designs, we wanted both a more relaxed facial expression and a battle-mode expression. It was also important to have a hair style for the classic Icewind Dale wind-blown ‘look’—which can also be used to show him leaping into battle—and a second, relaxed hair design. To give fans even more variety, we made the hair removable and interchangeable with the different heads,” Jones explains.

“The team also provided different hands for punching or sword attacks, as well as magical sword effects inspired by the special effects in the video game. We worked closely with the game design team to make sure his iconic swords were instantly recognizable. In order to decide which hands to include, the team focused on what the character needed to do, such as wielding his swords, punching, and holding objects such as the cat figurine.”

CAT POWER

Fans of Drizzt will know that the “cat figurine” Jones refers to is the *Figurine of Wondrous Power* that summons the panther Guenhwyvar from the Astral Plane. Those buying this premium Dungeons & Dragons action figure won’t have to imagine Guenhwyvar springing forth from the tiny sculpture, as she’s also been included as a scale figure to stand beside the six-inch version of Drizzt.

“Guenhwyvar is critical to Drizzt’s story. We wanted to capture the moment of Drizzt summoning his cat companion, so including the small cat figurine along with the full cat figure was a must,” says Jones, revealing that the team referenced panthers and several other large cats to accurately create muscle and bone structures.

“We took a more fantastical approach to capture her powerful presence. We enlarged Guenhwyvar’s scale and packed on the muscle, so she looks coiled and ready for action. The team also made the Guenhwyvar figure fully articulated so that fans could have a vast range of poses for her lunging, crouching, and leaping into battle.”

As if posable versions of Drizzt and his feline companion weren’t enough, additional bonus items continue to push the notion of “Premium”. On its release in December the box will include an unlock code for an exclusive item in the *Dark Alliance* video game. Artist Max Dunbar, who drew the beautiful packaging artwork, has also created six monster cards.



(Select to view)

These double-sided cards featuring exclusive illustrations of Icewind Dale’s creatures as they appear in the game have the art on the front and Drizzt quotes from Salvatore’s Icewind Dale saga on the back.

“They’re typed up in a cool, authentic D&D elven font, so it’s not something that can immediately be read but it’s a fun little Easter egg for those people who want to go down that rabbit hole and figure out how to decipher it,” says Jenna Hoffstein, Senior Play Designer at Hasbro.

“We had a huge amount of conversations about what should be included in the box and a d20 always rose right to the top of the list. We went back and forth to find one that looked incredible and our oversized, iridescent blue-green and purple d20 is going to be a beautiful addition to anyone’s dice collection.

“Our goal was to make this an incredible fan experience. It’s the first time we’ve created something like this so we wanted to swing big right off the bat and come up with something the fans can get really excited about. Drizzt is such a cool character and adding in Guenhwyvar made this a truly premium experience.”

The Dungeons & Dragons Drizzt & Guenhwyvar Premium Action Figure is released in December 2020 with an MSRP of \$39.99. It's available to **preorder now exclusively on Hasbro Pulse.**



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IN THE WORKS



Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2021

by Matt Chapman

Back in *Dragon+* #31 we gave a huge shout-out to some of the British streamers busy bigging up D&D. Just when you thought our coverage couldn't get any more Anglophile, it turns out that a quintessential part of UK culture has embraced Dungeons & Dragons: the annual.

“An annual is a yearly, hardcover book that provides a retrospective of a subject over the previous twelve months or introduces that subject to new people. Typical examples might include games such as *Minecraft*, fandoms such as *Star Wars*, or sports teams such as Premier League football clubs,” explains Craig Jelley, Editor of the *Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2021* at publisher Egmont.

“An annual is usually available in the fourth quarter of the year and is often bought as a holiday gift. As well as being sold in high street bookstores and online as you'd expect, annuals also pop up in UK supermarkets and other more general shops. And while they're often



(Select to view)

targeted at children, the *Dungeons & Dragons Annual* will be suitable for fans of all ages.”

“There has been a little confusion as an annual can mean something completely different in the comics world. Some YouTubers and influencers in America and Australia have asked, ‘Is it a D&D comic?’ It isn’t!” says Writer Susie Rae, adding that she hopes the hardback book will help draw in new D&D players.

“We have made our text very straightforward and accessible, which is in keeping with the achievements of the D&D Team with fifth edition in general. Readers can come to this as complete novices and quickly understand what’s going on and enjoy themselves, without needing to understand decades’ worth of lore.

“Our aim is to reassure those who might look at the numbers on a character sheet and see a large rulebook that D&D is not intimidating. It’s actually very straightforward either to play or to become a Dungeon Master, and it’s really fun once you give it a try.”

FULLY LOADED

The *Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2021* will cover four core areas: World and Lore; Gameplay; Community; and Activities. That includes epic monsters, heroes, and villains, popular locations, a look at character creation, Dungeon Master tips, and advice on world-building. Even with 96 pages to play with, there’s an awful lot to cram inside its covers.

“We’ve hopefully picked out everything you need to know to play D&D. That includes more obvious elements such as how to roll up a character and an explanation of the different races, as well as page spreads looking at different worlds such as Faerûn, Eberron, and Ravenloft. Those worlds are so interesting because they’re all very distinctive, with their own lore and background. They might even contain races people may not have realized are specific to those worlds.”



(Select to view)

Meanwhile, the “Activities” element includes puzzles, which are a staple of the British annual format. Rae has personally written those tricky brainteasers to test readers’ Wisdom and Intelligence.

“There have to be loads of activities and puzzles because that’s something which exists in every British annual. But I love writing puzzles and if it was up to me this whole annual would be puzzle pages!” she says with a laugh, adding that her favorite element is the short story that runs through the annual in three parts.

VOLO'S [ABRIDGED] GUIDE TO

BEHOLDER

Only bold adventurers dare venture into the Underdark, a sprawling network of tunnels and caverns deep below the earth. The creatures down there are unlike anything you will encounter on the surface. Twisted by the evil of the Underdark, these monsters are often hostile and always dangerous.

These odd creatures lurk in underground caverns and despise any creature they perceive to be different. They are violent and greedy, hungry for power and quick to attack any threat. They often carve out their own lairs underground, which they guard jealously.

APPEARANCE

These are highly distinctive monsters – one giant, floating eye surrounded by ten tentacle-like stalks, on the end of which are more eyes. These many eyes make it difficult to surprise, as it can see in multiple directions at once. Much of a beholder's 'face', besides the eye, is dominated by a gaping maw, filled with sharp teeth.

FAVOURABLE ATTACKS

A beholder's most dangerous ability is the cone of antimagical that emanates from its central eye, which neutralises any magic within. They can also fire random magical rays from their eye stalks, ranging from charms to disintegration rays.

HOW TO DEFEAT THEM

Sadly, there is no simple way to kill a beholder. They are most vulnerable to melee weapon attacks – but that would involve sneaking up on it, which is notoriously difficult to do. Your best option is to create a distraction, while an ally sneaks up to attack.

KEY FACTS

TYPE: Undead

CHALLENGE RATING: 13

COMMONLY FOUND:

Any terrain, but particularly somewhere where a bloody battle has been fought.

DUERGAR

Duergar are descended from a clan of normal dwarves who were enslaved in the Underdark by mind flayers, who performed cruel experiments on them, for several generations. A combination of this torture, and centuries spent underground, caused them to evolve into a dark and bitter race, perfectly adapted to survive in the dark, unforlgoing environment of the Underdark.

APPEARANCE

At first glance, duergar look like dwarves – short, stocky and bearded. Beyond that, they are quite different. Their skin and hair is a dull grey, and they are generally bald. Unlike dwarves, female duergar cannot grow beards.

FAVOURABLE ATTACKS

Duergar are masters of ambush. They can turn invisible and slink through the shadows, primed to attack with picks and javelins. They can also grow to a large size, giving their attacks extra strength.

HOW TO DEFEAT THEM

Like many creatures of the Underdark, duergar are sensitive to sunlight. Though they are resistant to many conditions, including becoming charmed or poisoned, they are not particularly hardy and can be killed by a few well placed attacks or spells.

LIGHT IN THE DARK

If you travel to the Underdark, magics should equip themselves with Sunsensor, similar spells, as most creatures found there are sensitive to sunlight.

KEY FACTS

TYPE: Humanoid

CHALLENGE RATING: 1

COMMONLY FOUND:

In the Underdark

58

59

(Select to view)

“We’ve included the text of a party playing their first game, which cuts between the players at the table and the game itself. This includes all of the tropes that might happen at a first game. There might be one person not taking it too seriously having shown up and been handed a character by the DM that they’ve called Steve the dwarf. Then there might be another taking it very seriously, having written an eighty-page backstory for their character.

MASTER DUNGEON-MASTERING

Once you've played a few games of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and started to get a proper grip on the rules of play, what next? By this point, let's assume you're fully addicted and looking for the next step. Why not try become a Dungeon Master?

DMing may seem daunting if you've never done it before. But never fear! We're here to break down everything you'll need to know to run your first game.

CHOOSING YOUR CAMPAIGN

If this is your first time DM'ing, it's easiest to pick a pre-written campaign so you can get to grips with the intricacies of running a game without having to make too much up on the spot. There are dozens of these to choose from, for all levels, with a huge range of tones, settings, stories, and lengths. As you get more confident, you could write your own campaigns, but it's a good idea to use a pre-written one as a framework regardless.

SETTING THE SCENE

The tone and setting of a game can vary wildly – and it's completely up to you. Discuss with your players beforehand what everyone wants from the game and what they don't want to encounter. If you want a serious setting with in-depth world building and hefty backstories, there are decades of D&D lore to play with. It's also important to know what game players want to have and what they DON'T want to experience.

CREATING CHARACTERS

You want to make sure you have a good balance of characters in a party to suit your game. You will likely need a tank (a barbarian, fighter or paladin for instance), a magic user (a sorcerer, wizard or warlock), and a healer (a druid or cleric, though monks and some other classes can select healing abilities too). Before you play, discuss the motivation and backstory of the characters with each player to allow you to weave this into your narrative.

PLANNING ENCOUNTERS

Encounters can vary wildly. They may be a basic encounter, an NPC offering a reward for procuring a special item, or a hidden door with a puzzle to solve ... the list goes on. It's important to have a mix of encounters to add variety and give all characters a chance to shine. Some encounters may be vital to the overall story – these should be signposted and easy for the players to find. Never underestimate your players' ability to completely ignore an encounter you've set up.

ROLEPLAYING

For many, this is the most daunting part of D&D, particularly if you're not used to performing. Just relax, and remember that everyone's here to have fun. Try to come up with a one-sentence motivation and short description of all of your NPCs. This will make them easier to role play. As DM, it's your job to encourage roleplaying from your players too. Give them plenty of opportunities to get to know their characters, and reward strong roleplaying choices with inspiration.

DEATH SAVING THROWS

If a player character makes a hit point, they are unconscious. For subsequent turns, they must make a death saving throw. This is a d20 roll, where 19 is a fail and 20 is a success. Three successful rolls will stabilize the character. Three failed rolls will result in character death. Another character will try to stabilise them with their own action, using a healing spell or item.

ATTACKS AND DAMAGE

When a player attacks, they must roll a d20 and add their attack bonus with the relevant weapon (or spellcasting modifier, if they're casting). If the resulting number is equal to or higher than their target's Armor Class, they hit. Damage will then be rolled, as determined by the weapon or spell they used.

ON YOUR TURN

On a player's turn, they can perform one Movement, one action (usually an attack, spell or further movement) and one bonus action, which is often an ability related to class or magic items.

AT THE END OF COMBAT

At the end of a round of combat (aka a second), if you can't feasibly do something in that time, you probably can't do it in combat!

MAPS CAN HELP IMMENSELY

Maps can help immerse the players in the world you've created, and are useful for tracking combat and other encounters.

ALWAYS KEEP A FEW RANDOM ENCOUNTERS READY

Things are handy if you need to pass time, or if players have wandered off unexpectedly and you need to fill in some gaps.

ROLL FOR INITIATIVE

Combat is the most structured aspect of D&D and can be one of the hardest parts to master. Once you've got the hand around it, though, it's very straightforward.

INITIATIVE

Once characters are in combat, ask everyone to roll a d20 for Initiative, as you roll for enemies and any NPCs in the battle. This will determine the order of play, beginning with the highest initiative roll. It's up to the DM to track initiative and the order that each character receives a turn.

ON YOUR TURN

On a player's turn, they can perform one Movement, one action (usually an attack, spell or further movement) and one bonus action, which is often an ability related to class or magic items.

AT THE END OF COMBAT

At the end of a round of combat (aka a second), if you can't feasibly do something in that time, you probably can't do it in combat!

(Select to view)

“I’ve been playing D&D for about five years and also been a DM for one year and quite a few of my friends are either DMs or players, so that was easy to write. I hope one of my colleagues doesn’t mind that I’ve used his character name, Orcimus Maximus, which I thought was hilarious.”

Dragon+ knows there’s no better homage than appearing in this British institution, as four of our magazine covers have been included with their text removed should a reader want to use them as posters. Here’s hoping the *Dungeons & Dragons Annual* becomes a perennial.

***Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2021* is released October 29, 2020 with an MSRP of £9.99 (\$12.75) and is available to **preorder now**.**

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IN THE WORKS



Warriors of Waterdeep

by David Axbey

The next major updates for the hit D&D mobile game *Warriors of Waterdeep* take a walk on the wild side. Set to go live in October and November respectively, the *Sorcery & Status* and *Swamp & Scale* updates introduce wild magic-wielding gnome hero Coriolis, while also opening up a new area to explore in the rotting reaches of Forestfall Fen. Exploration Events are also added for the first time, creating a new way for players to experience fresh settings.

BORN TO BE WILD

Harnessing the unpredictable power of wild magic, new spell-slinger Coriolis is the first sorcerer class hero to appear in *Warriors of Waterdeep*. “Coriolis is a mechanic by training and her family runs a clockworks repair business in the Trade Ward of Waterdeep,” says Stephen David Wark, Brand Manager at the game’s developer Ludia.



Coriolis (select to view)

“But she’s an artist at heart. She’d much rather turn spare gears into organic sculptures that remind her of the stars in the night sky than use them to repair broken clockwork. One night, her intense inspiration for a new sculpture triggered her first surge of wild magic.

That surge sent her into the astral plane, although she was so engrossed in her work that she barely noticed!

“Her character concept is an adventuring artist and her personality is carefree workaholic: she works hard all the time, but is open to accommodating any changes that life—or wild magic—throws her way, because she adapts the unexpected into whatever she needs for her current project.”

As is befitting of a wild magic user, Coriolis’ sorcery is unlike any other magic in the game, with many of her powers either bestowing random buffs on her allies or burdening her opponents with equally random debuffs. “Coriolis knows she’s helping, and her allies know she’s helping,” Stephen tells us, “But no-one’s ever entirely sure what form that help will take.”

Her sorcerous abilities also allow her to manipulate the odds in her favor, granting good fortune to her friends and misfortune to her foes. Fortune guarantees that those bonus effects will trigger, while misfortune causes effects to fizzle. Coriolis can also manipulate turn order, reduce her ability cooldowns, and even control board positions.

“Coriolis’ abilities make her a formidable teammate for heroes who rely on bonus effects, such as Naomlen, Raika, Shevarith, or Saarvin,” says Stephen. “Her main weapons are spellcasting orbs of her own creation, from the common *intricate rings* to the legendary *constellation of power*. She also uses the delightfully chaotic *wand of wonder* and wondrous items such as the *wind fan* and *ring of spell turning*.”



SILVERHAND GEAR

While remaining tight-lipped about the full details, Stephen adds that Laeral Silverhand, Waterdeep's item crafter extraordinaire, is also working on special Silverhand gear to reward Coriolis for her labors. Meanwhile, Coriolis' available outfits will reflect her background and emergence as a mercurial magical powerhouse, ranging from humble workshop overalls to complex sorcerer robes befitting a successful adventuring artist.



(Select to view)

Those looking to source the sorcerer will initially find *Warriors of Waterdeep*'s newest hero as part of a for-pay Early Access bundle. Players will then be able to add Coriolis to their parties by completing the Wild Surge recruitment event at a later date. Finally, she'll also be available as a Renown reward for players at Renown 16 and under, or as a quest prize for those at Renown 17 or higher, Stephen explains.

SWAMP THINGS

Coriolis' appearance in *Warriors of Waterdeep* marks an important milestone, as the mobile game will now include one of every basic character race and class from the *D&D Player's Handbook*. While the *Sorcery & Status* update introduces the sorcerer class, the following *Swamp & Scale* release offers players an entirely new area to explore in the claustrophobic swamplands of Forestfall Fen.

"Forestfall Fen is a lush forest rotting from the inside out," says Stephen. "The outer rings of trees look generally unremarkable, albeit haunted by the occasional ghoul and green hag. But the terrain changes into a murky swamp as the heroes approach the center.

"Perhaps Forestfall Fen is only thought of as unremarkable because so few travelers who attempt to cross it survive to tell the tale! In any event, the swampy parts of the fen now appear to be encroaching on the outer forest. This unnatural state of affairs is worthy of investigation.

"Your heroes will discover some new forest-themed monsters, including fey creatures such as green hags and plant creatures such as vine blights, as well as new versions of old familiar foes such as ghouls, giant spiders, and trolls. These new monsters have slightly different abilities, though, so your usual tactics won't necessarily work against them."



Meenlock concept art (select to view)

That’s the “*Swamp*” element of the update sorted, but what about the “*Scale*”? Hang onto your hats, adventurers!

“The black dragon Vorazidrar rules Forestfall Fen as its queen,” says Stephen. “Her lair is at the heart of the swamp, and she controls her terrain as ruthlessly as she controls the denizens who pay her tribute and fulfil her will. I’m practically twirling my moustache with villainous glee at the thought of a player’s first encounter with Vorazidrar!”



Vorazidrar's Lair (select to view)

EXPLORATION EVENTS

The addition of Forestfall Fen to *Warriors of Waterdeep*'s landscape coincides with the introduction of Exploration Events, which are a way of introducing lower-level adventurers to a new setting.

“Ordinarily, a new theme is added to the end of the game, so only high-level players who have already completed Explore mode can experience the new environment and fight its monsters. Everyone else has to wait until they complete the existing adventures,” Stephen explains.

“However, players of any level can explore Forestfall Fen through Exploration Events. For two weeks at a time, two chapters will be unlocked for all players. The difficulty level of the chapters will be

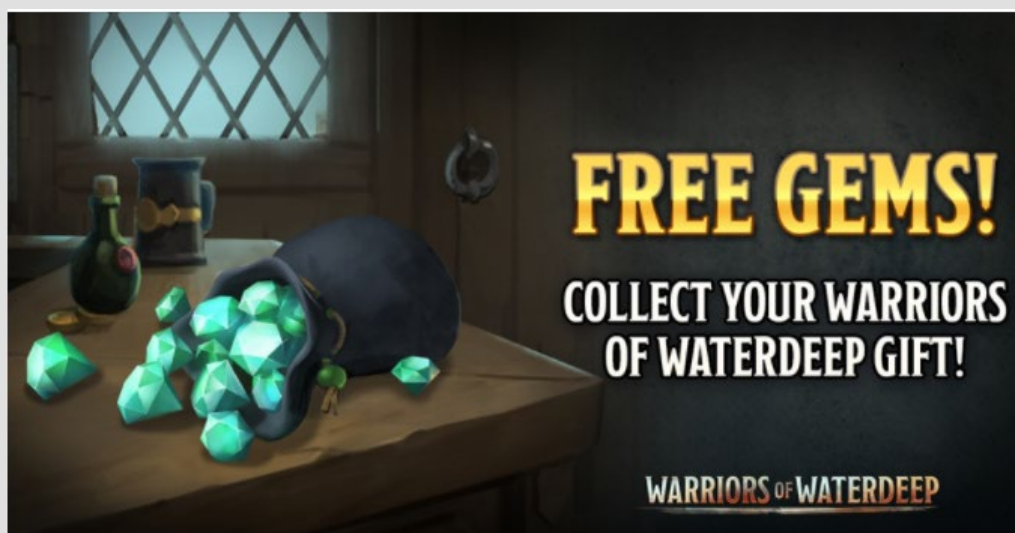
adjusted to give players of any level a fair challenge.”

“Under the new system, players will earn a prize for every dungeon they complete in the chapter. If there’s any time remaining, they can pay gems to replay the chapters and collect additional prizes. A player could therefore finish chapters three and four and immediately replay them, or choose to wait until chapters five and six become available.”

According to Stephen, the Exploration Event is slated to last for 10 weeks, with five blocks of two chapters each. Once the event is over, the Forestfall Fen adventure will be unlocked as part of the game’s normal progression. Players who accessed it during the Exploration Event can experience it again at its standard difficulty level, with the usual dungeon chest and leader card packs as prizes.

What with a wild new hero, sinister swamps, and a party-stomping black dragon boss, *Warriors of Waterdeep*’s latest update is shaping up to be something special.

***Warriors Of Waterdeep* is available now for **Android** and **iOS** devices as a free download with in-game purchases. The *Sorcery & Status* update is available now, while the *Swamp & Scale* update will follow on November 20, 2020.**



Our friends at Ludia are gifting 50 gems to every reader who clicks on [this link](#). You must have completed your first challenge in *Warriors of Waterdeep* and you must click the link on the

mobile device where the game is installed, as it will open the game to deliver the reward.

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IN THE WORKS



Shop Dungeons & Dragons, Powered by WizKids

There's now a new way for DMs and players to get their hands on D&D products! The **Shop Dungeons & Dragons, Powered by WizKids** store, is perfect for your tabletop accessory needs.

Upcoming products can be pre-ordered ahead of release or you can search for that much-needed item to top off your current campaign. *Dragon+* spoke with Vee Mus'e, WizKids' Social Media Marketer, about this portal's possibilities.



What does it mean for WizKids to have a portal bringing together all of its D&D products?

Vee Mus'e: Our product team is made up of not just fans of Dungeons & Dragons but also players. The game is part of who we are, which is why it saddens us when we hear that some of the beloved products that we create for players are not accessible to them. That might be because our D&D product offerings have grown immensely over the years, which has been very exciting but can be challenging for stores with limited space. While we are initially launching the online store with a limited number of products, our goal is to eventually offer our full D&D line.

Additionally, many players tell us that they don't have access to a **nearby local game store**. The recent pandemic has not helped that

situation. Ultimately, our hope is that the online store benefits those players that may not otherwise have access to our catalog of Dungeons & Dragons products.

RECEIVE 10% OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER!

Dragon+ readers can receive a 10% discount off their first purchase at the Shop Dungeons & Dragons, Powered by WizKids online store using the following code:

DRAGON10

Limit one-time use coupon code per customer, while supply lasts. Cannot be combined with other promo codes. Past purchases do not apply. Void where prohibited. Offer valid until 11/15/2020.



Can fans expect exclusive products and minis not available for sale anywhere else?

We have always run convention exclusive programs, and this year for a variety of reasons we wanted to expand that program to include all of our partners—conventions, local games stores, and our online store.

We plan to offer exclusives in the online store that will never be “for-sale” by WizKids. In fact, we are currently offering an adorably

frightening **Yeti Tyke Promo Set** in the online store that includes three pre-painted miniatures in endearing poses. Please note that these will be a limited run and at this time we have no plans to reprint them.

We always encourage players to support their local game store and are happy to announce that we plan to offer different exclusives that can only be acquired at retail starting in 2021.



Yeti Tykes (select to view)

Will you be integrating any existing content from your D&D ranges, such as posting Nolzur's video painting seminars next to those figures?

We are exploring ways to build engagement at the online store. This includes running live painting seminars, unboxing new and upcoming releases live, and more!

Might we see a loyalty program where fans' purchases build up rewards?

We are planning to integrate a loyalty rewards program to give back to players as a "thank you" for their purchase and continued support. Keep an eye on the store for updates.

The Shop Dungeons & Dragons, Powered by WizKids store is **online now.**



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Extra Life 2020

How you can help the amazing work of
Children's Miracle Network Hospitals by
playing, donating, watching, bidding, and buying

Formed in 2008, **Extra Life** is an annual fundraising event where people from every kind of gaming space come together to support Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. The D&D Team has been a proud partner of Extra Life since 2015, and thanks to your generosity Wizards of the Coast has been able to donate over \$1,000,000 in total donations to this important cause.

Yet it has never been more important to get involved or donate. The funds raised through Extra Life were already extremely important, helping to plug a substantial gap between healthcare funding and costs. Steven Underwood, Senior Manager of Extra Life Partnerships, cites data from the 2018 US Census Bureau which reveals that forty million American kids have a need for medical care that isn't being

met.

With a global pandemic putting further pressure on hospitals, the need for donations and community support is increased even further. Costs related to personal protective equipment (PPE), Covid-19 testing supplies, and telemedicine equipment have stretched CMN Hospitals' precious funds even further.

"Under normal conditions, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals provide care to sixty-two kids every minute, adding up to ten million children every year," he says.

"And that's during a normal year. More people are out of work or underemployed because of the pandemic. That has led more families than ever before to seek charitable care for their children at CMN Hospital. We all need to work together to meet this overwhelming need."

MAGIC: THE GATHERING

The *MTG* Team are getting into the Extra Life spirit with a **Secret Lair drop** that celebrates children across its Multiverse. The four premium foil cards (featuring alternative art by Victor Adame Minguez, Rudy Siswanto, Eric Wilkerson, and Kieran Yanner) are **Amulet of Vigor**, **Collected Company**, **Consecrated Sphinx**, and **Teferi's Protection**. A single-use code for one *MTG Arena* "Extra Life 2020" themed sleeve is also included, alongside a single-use code for one copy of each card in Magic Online. A donation of \$30 from each purchase will go directly to Extra Life. The cards go on sale beginning 9 a.m. PT November 6 through 9 a.m. PT November 9, 2020 and will be available for preorder soon from the **Secret Lair website**.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

When playing Dungeons & Dragons, it's not uncommon to finish up a campaign with your characters saving the world or rescuing innocents... but fans can have a strong, positive impact in this world, too.

You can contribute at any time towards the Extra Life fundraising effort by making a donation. To help out, please consider donating directly to the **D&D Team**. You can also donate to any of the DMs and groups within the D&D Team—head to [this page](#) and click the Roster tab to find them.

If you want to raise money by creating your own individual or sub-team page, it's easy! The Extra Life website guides you through the steps of registering, and you can choose to be automatically added to the Dungeons & Dragons Extra Life Team. All donations that you and your sub-team raise will help us reach our goal!

To participate, follow these steps:

- 1) Join Extra Life and set a personal goal.
- 2) When creating your Extra Life account, choose “Join a Team” and select “Dungeons & Dragons.”
- 3) Complete the remaining steps for creating an account.
- 4) Decide what you want to play and when you want to play it.

5) Customize your page to tell people what you'll be doing, as this will help generate donations.

6) Spread the word to potential donors.

WATCH AND DONATE

The official date for Extra Life's yearly game day event is November 7, 2020 but games can be played and donations can be made at any time. Naturally, there'll be a flurry of activity based around that date so keep your eyes peeled all that week on the [official D&D Twitch channel](#) as livestreamers will no doubt be flying their Extra Life flags.

And with [Gamehole Con](#) in full swing (running from 5th-8th November) there'll be special events to look forward to. Chris Lindsay will provide a spectacle for the ages as he gathers his celebrity friends for an epic adventure, including Satine Phoenix, Jason Charles Miller, Kyle Vogt, and Jim Butcher (no word yet if the *Dresden Files* author will be playing a wizard P.I.).

BUY UNIQUE MERCH!

The D&D Team is also looking to go above and beyond 2019's incredible charity haul by partnering with eBay on a charity auction. They'll be posting five book galleys for fans to bid on, with each one accompanied with a Letter of Authenticity signed by Senior Art Director, Kate Irwin. The eBay auctions will run from Saturday to Tuesday, November 7-17, 2020, so if you'd like to grab an editorial print of the cover of a D&D sourcebook, keep an eye on the [official D&D website](#)/social media channels to see when the links go live and get involved.

The auctions will include galleys for *Rime of the Frostmaiden* and *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* (with both the incredible original covers and the amazing alt-covers up for grabs), as well as *Critical Role's* fifth edition sourcebook, *The Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*.

Emi Tanji has also designed an amazing image for this year's D&D Extra Life 2020 apparel, featuring an incredibly tall inhabitant of Icewind Dale. Hang on a minute, that's no goliath, it's three kobolds

in a trench coat! You can pick up items featuring the duplicitous kobolds from **Custom Ink** through Friday November 13, 2020.



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PLAYABLE CONTENT

If you're going to be DMing or playing a game in support of Extra Life, you could help out even further by buying and using material that donates directly to the cause. There are plenty of modules and resources to be found at both the DMs Guild and D&D Beyond, and all proceeds that the D&D Team receives from sales go to benefit Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

Adventure with Muk: Meet Muk, the very bravest goblin, and his best friend Birdsquirrel, in this activity book suitable for players of all "levels"! (Pay What You Want, Suggested Price \$4.99: **DMs Guild**)

Infernal Machine Rebuild: A fallen clock tower holding components from an ancient artifact kickstarts a quest to reassemble the fabled *Infernal Machine of Lum the Mad*! (Pay What You Want, Suggested Price \$9.99: **DMs Guild; D&D Beyond**)

Lost Laboratory of Kwalish: Directly connecting with *Infernal Machine Rebuild*, this adventure for levels 5-10 includes the famed suit of *powered armor*. (\$9.99: **DMs Guild; D&D Beyond**)

Locathah Rising: An exploration of what happens when a normally peaceful species is pushed to the point of open conflict, including rules for creating locathah characters. (\$9.99: **DMs Guild; D&D Beyond**)

The Lost Kenku: Finding a kenku thief in the jungles of Chult isn't a task for the inexperienced, without needing to navigate the odd community of Weirding in this adventure for 4th level characters. (\$4.99: [DMs Guild](#))

Mordenkainen's Fiendish Folio: Crawling from the darkest recesses of D&D's history comes a ferocious menagerie of monsters malevolent and benign! As an added note, this collection won the [2020 ENnie award](#) in the Best Monster/Adversary category! (\$9.99: [DMs Guild](#); [D&D Beyond](#))

Volo's Waterdeep Enchiridion: The foremost guide to the city of Waterdeep, reprinting the chapter from the *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* sourcebook. (\$5.99: [DMs Guild](#))

Turtle Package: This supplement expands upon the Snout of Omgar from *Tomb of Annihilation*, and includes the turtle playable character race and the Dangwaru, Typhoon Palace adventure location. (\$9.99: [DMs Guild](#); [D&D Beyond](#))

One Grung Above: Including summaries of the characters from the [livestreamed game](#) in all of their glory, plus the unofficial grung traits used to created them. (\$4.99: [DMs Guild](#); [D&D Beyond](#))

A GREAT LOCAL CAUSE

Extra Life is proudly committed to using 100 percent of the funds raised to support local kids and families. Every dollar raised through Extra Life for CMN Hospitals helps kids at your community children's hospital (information on international support options can be [found here](#)).

"Some of the funds raised by Wizards of the Coast in 2019 were directed towards the Seattle Children's Autism Center. The beauty in our program is that we empower our hospitals all over North America to provide the best care to their local communities. Seattle has a need for a facility like this, and those funds allow them to address that specifically," says Underwood, Senior Manager of Extra Life Partnerships.

"CMN Hospitals help fill local funding gaps that save children's lives and unleash their future potential. We believe that when we

positively change kids' health we can transform patients' and families' entire lives. Our children's hospitals provide the treatments and cures patients desperately need today so that they can fulfill their potential tomorrow, and help families prepare for and cope with some of the hardest moments of their lives.”

The official Extra Life Game Day is November 7, 2020—or choose your own date! Visit the [Extra Life website](#) to sign up and get involved or check out [the D&D Team's efforts](#) and donate to help their fundraising.

SUPPORT LGBTQ+ YOUTH



The D&D Team is also supporting Shirts for a Cause for a third year, with net profits benefiting [Lambert House](#), a nonprofit that empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth through the development of leadership, social, and life skills.

Connection is a big part of healthy youth development,

and Lambert House provides over 40 programs and support groups, plus hobby and interest groups, leadership development internships, major events, mentoring, college advising, and more. 100% of the proceeds from these shirts sales goes directly to the charity.

[BUY APPAREL](#)

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Streaming Highlights

The monster D&D launch event for Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden dominates this issue's video highlights.



The first ever *D&D Celebration* event fittingly sent chills down our spines as we entered the world of Icewind Dale. From murderous monsters in liveplay games to serious tips on playing and DMing the world's greatest roleplaying game, streamers and panelists had to “kobold or go home” (© the Oxventure crew).

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

OXVENTURE

Dungeon Master Johnny Chiodini kicks off *D&D Celebration 2020*'s live games, as Dob (Luke Westaway), Merilwen (Ellen Rose), Egbert (Mike Channell), Prudence (Jane Douglas), Corazón de Ballena (Andy Farrant) ditch their mugs for hot toddy-soaked marshmallows

(A.K.A. marshmerlots) on a trip to Icewind Dale. Can the party help Dale (no prizes for guessing his first name) solve the mystery of the disappearing kobolds?



DUNGEONS & DESIGNERS

With a **brand-new adventure** unfolding in the frozen north and **massive new options for the game** announced courtesy of a legendary D&D character, Dungeons & Dragons has something for every gamer—whether player or DM! Principal game designers Jeremy Crawford and Chris Perkins sit down with host Elle Osili-Wood for an insider's guide to *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, the upcoming *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*, and more!



HOW WE ROLL

If the cold doesn't kill you, the people of Good Mead might! DM Joe Trier imposes the exhaustion of the frozen tundra on Graham Voss (Kuran Javeri), as he joins Xalfiz the Practical (Eoghan Falvey), Gann (Niall O'Beirn), and Kestra (Virginia Page) on the hunt for a murderer. Will they get their man? Or will something more dangerous hunt them?



ADVENTURERS WANTED: LIVE

Moderator Amy Lynn Dzura and panelists Ma'at Crook and Claire Hoffman discuss all the latest D&D Adventurers League news, including updates to the DDAL guidelines as organized play heads into the next campaign season.



A DARKENED WISH

Dungeon Master B. Dave Walters lives out his tiefling fantasy as the protector of Caer Konig, hiring Aiden (Sam de Leve), Xander (D'Artagnan Mataliano), Helene (May Leigh Damage), Rayonde (Alcuin Gersh), and Kerrin & Karrin (Aki) to track down thieves (or portal ghosts... but probably thieves) in the snow-blighted region.



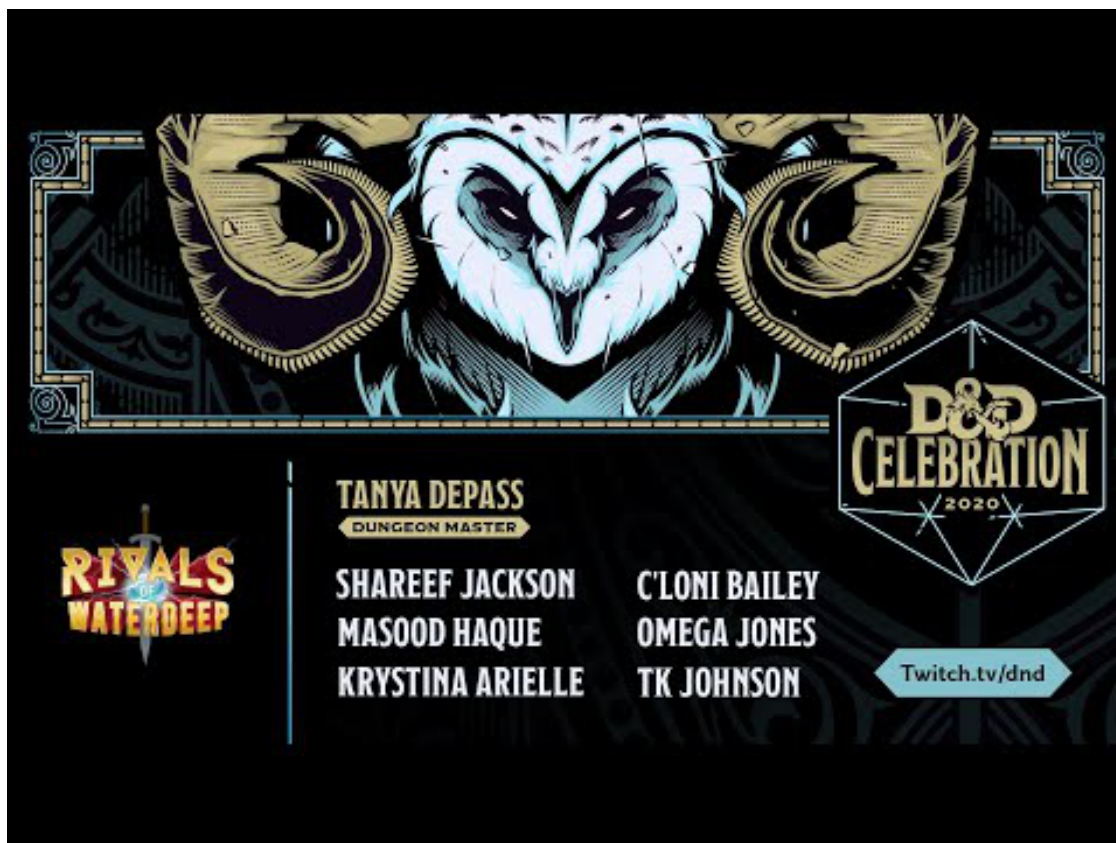
INVISIBLE DRAGONS: DESIGNING MENTAL HEALTH ADVENTURES

Tackling mental health awareness is always a challenge. But by taking a caring approach to D&D, it can be an adventure. Relive the excitement as a crew of experienced mental health experts and advocates (moderator Raffael “Dr. B” Boccamazzo and panelists Krystina Arielle, Makenzie De Armas, Dr. Kelli Dunlap, and Gabe Hicks) speed-build the structure for a mental health-themed adventure with the audience’s participation.



RIVALS OF WATERDEEP

Rivals regulars Lobiz (Masood Haque) and Shaka (Shareef Jackson) are joined by guest characters Mermot (C'Loni Bailey), Blake Everflame (Krystina Arielle), Gazini (Omega Jones), and Gille (T.K. Johnson). DM Tanya DePass leads them on a trip to find a cauldron of plenty that may or may not exist, saving the missing fishermen who definitely do exist along the way if it fits in with their plans.



You're ready to share your adventure with the world but don't know how to start? Join moderator Lysa Penrose and **Dungeon Masters Guild** community authors Justice Arman, Celeste Conowitch, and Ashley Warren as they reveal how they create and publish their content. Includes a live Q&A with the DMs Guild community!



ACQUISITIONS INC.

The multiverse's most famous adventuring company returns! Dungeon Master Jeremy Crawford oversees more mayhem as Acquisitions Incorporated Founder and CEO Omin Dran (Jerry Holkins), Jim Darkmagic (Mike Krahulik), Evelyn Marthain (Anna Prosser), Bobby Zimmeruski (*WWE* Superstar Xavier Woods), and Strix Beestinger (Holly Conrad) return to Waterdeep for an experience that's truly pie in the sky!



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2020

THE GRAND PLAN

DM Chris Hislop kicks off the first D&D live game on Saturday, as a group of self-confessed “dodgy characters” from the town of Lonelywood find themselves drawn into a grand plan orchestrated by Mable (Anjuli Smith). Can unconventional ice cream vendor Scoop (Aoife Wilson), rip-specialist Teary (Brandy Camel), blast expert Boomer (Kim Richards), and ex-soldier Rhazda (T.K. Johnson) successfully break into Revel’s End prison?



BEHIND THE SCREEN: DM ROUNDTABLE

Moderator Kelly Lynne D’Angelo asks a gathering of epic storytellers—Travis McElroy, Brennan Lee Mulligan, Satine Phoenix, B. Dave Walters, and Deborah Ann Woll—to share tips and advice on how to be the best Dungeon Master you can be.



THE GREAT KNUCKLEHEAD RALLY

DM Brennan Lee Mulligan leads a quirky, tabaxi-heavy team—Selene (Jody Houser), Ran'dei Sav'age (Gaurav Gulati), Graeth (Liam O'Brien), Roussimoff (Carlos Luna), Kovack (Aabria Iyengar), and Can of Tuna (Chris Perkins)—on an adventure he's calling *The Great Knucklehead Rally*. There aren't any knucklehead trout and there's even less rally, but come for the in-person foley effects and stay for Ten-Towns' entry into the world of death metal.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BARD

Bards, throughout history, have been the storytellers that shape entire cultures and societies with their words and song. Moderator Omega “Critical Bard” Jones and panelists Krystina Arielle, Kelli Butler, Lauren Urban, and Eugenio Vargas dissect the very meaning of the word and break down the truths around the class, both in game and out.



FROM THE BEGGARS COURT

It's an antipodean mashup as New Zealand stream *Viva La Dirt League* meets Australian stream *Dragon Friends* for a hilarious *Midnight Run*-style adventure. Dodging the distraction of square donuts, DM David Harmon guides Freezo (Michael Hing), Philge (Alex Lee), Jobson Lugnutt (Ben Jenkins), Bodger the blacksmith (Rowan Bettjemen), Baradun (Adam King), and Greg the garlic farmer (Alan Morrison) on a mission to deliver a serial killer to Revel's End prison.



HIGH ROLLERS: PERILS OF THE ID

DM Mark Hulmes mines the isolation and terror of a sci-fi horror movie as Isla (Katie Morrison), John Carpenter (Chris Trott), Ash (Kim Richards), Quintessa (Rhiannon Gower), and Dr. P.H. Decker (Tom Hazell) enter a strange craft to escape a raging snowstorm. Who will survive? And what will be left of them?



THE INTREPID ADVENTURER

Whether you're an apprentice abjurer building your first tower or a veteran vampire lord constructing yet another catacomb, dungeon design doesn't have to be daunting. In under an hour, moderator Jennifer Kretchmer (*Silver and Steel*), Makenzie De Armas (*Kingdoms and Warfare*), Alicia Marie (DC FanDome), Elsa Sjunneson (*The Fate Accessibility Toolkit*), and Sara Thompson (The Combat Wheelchair) help you navigate the pitfalls—both the figurative and trap varieties—while creating a playable dungeon with an emphasis on accessible design.



REALMSMITH: COLD-HEARTED KILLER

It's just another gruesome day in Ten-Towns as Metrimion (B. Dave Walters), Reya Sunshine (Noura Ibrahim), Daisy (Kailey Bray), FinBin (Tennessee Martin), Arabian Maximus (Mousa Kraish), and Garret Velryn (Xander Jeanneret) gather at the Grumpy Moose Inn. Howling wind, bitter cold, foul tempers, and snow drifts big enough to bury a parliament (or should that be a sloth?) of owlbears. And as Dungeon Master Jason Azevedo also explains, there's a killer on the loose...



WEAVING ASIAN STORIES

Asian themes in tabletop RPGs are usually characterized by two words: “exotic” and “mysterious”. Moderator Daniel Kwan (the *Asians Represent* podcast) leads panelists Steve Huynh, Ammar Ijaz, Pamela Punzalan, and Ahmed Aljabry in a discussion of how to go beyond those terms and more positively navigate Asian cultures in D&D game design.



There's a visit from mom for Agnis (Anna Prosser) and Tarkhal Crownsilver (Jonathan Indovino), as she asks her children and their advisors—Azara Mithras (Mica Burton) and Marcel (Nathan Sharp)—to join her on a mission to Icewind Dale. Meanwhile, DM Mark Hulmes brings three kobolds in a trench coat magically to life.



INSIDE THE D&D STUDIO

Where does Dungeons & Dragons go from here? How does the D&D team decide what products to make and what settings to visit, in order to further the game? Moderator Elle Osili-Wood sits down with Director of Product Management Liz Schuh and Executive Producer Ray Winninger for a behind-the-scenes discussion about the continuing creation and stewardship of Dungeons & Dragons.



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IT'S TIME TO RAISE YOUR GAME.
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The Art of Drizzt

Artist Max Dunbar tackles another D&D icon as he captures Drizzt and Guenhwyvar in action.

Max Dunbar rubs shoulders with some powerful people. When he's not convincing Minsc to sit still (Boo needs no such instruction) for long enough to capture his signature purple face tattoo in the **IDW comic**, he's pulling on a ski jacket and heading to Icewind Dale to see another D&D legend in action.

"I was sent a large amount of research on Drizzt, including a lot of reference for the character that showed every little bit of detail. The armor he's wearing is beautifully designed and really ornate and I could see it in all of its glory to make sure I captured the details accurately," Dunbar says, referencing the incredible action shot he's created for the Drizzt and Guenhwyvar Premium Action Figure.

"We then had a lot of back and forth as we spent time perfecting the looks of the characters, their positions, and even the sizes of them in relation to each other. It was a fun and interesting process. And we eventually arrived at a place where everyone was really happy with the image."

SNOW SCENES

If the character and his faithful panther companion demanded the necessary amount of respect, then the location R.A. Salvatore's drow hero finds himself in also needed to be accurately depicted. Dunbar researched images from Black Isle Studios' Icewind Dale video games, as well as real-world photography that would help him recreate the snowy environment.

"The screenshots of the video game helped me get an idea of the architecture and the setting. I assumed that it was all going to be evergreen forest and snow and mountains, but I wanted to make sure I had an accurate depiction of it," he says.

"I was also responsible for coloring this image so I wanted to make sure that I understood the way different times of the day might affect the snow. Snow reflects a lot of light, so bright sunlight and sunsets affect it very differently. I made a collage of mountains, snow, and trees to have open on my computer screen as I was working and took little bits of inspiration from here and there.

"I haven't worked with a snowy environment very often so there was some trial and error. I experimented a little bit with coloring over line art, or changing the line art to be lower capacity to seem less harsh against the snow, and found a happy medium. Of the two pieces I created for the action figure box art, one was a sunset and used that lighting scheme. I wanted to make the other look as cold as possible, so I used a bright blue sky. It's midday and the characters are on top of a mountain, so I threw a bunch of snow particles into the wind to make it look bright but very cold."



(Select to view)

COMIC CREATIONS

While Dunbar describes most Dungeons & Dragons artwork as being “beautiful and painterly”, he admits this project was more in his wheelhouse. The style of the image he created was similar to the work he does on the official D&D *Legends Of Baldur’s Gate* comic-book series.

“I’ve been working as a comic-book artist as my main profession since 2012 and consider myself more of a comic-book colorist and illustrator. Even when I was working on the *concept art for Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus* at the Wizards of the Coast HQ, I was going back to my hotel at night and working on comic-book pages. It was a little intense but I was having such a good time that it didn’t matter,” he reveals, as we also admire the art he’s created for the comic *Stone Star* (in partnership with Jim Zub).

“*Stone Star* is a creator-owned series that Jim and I have worked on for a while now. It’s a colorful, all-ages, action-adventure space fantasy and we’re working on *Stone Star: Season Two* for Comixology right now. The story revolves around a gladiatorial arena that’s built into an asteroid and travels from planet to planet entertaining the masses, but there’s a dark underside to it. We follow a character named Dale who gets swept up in the whole gladiatorial drama and has to fight to survive in this traveling circus. We’re having a lot of fun with it.”



(Select to view)

LOCKDOWN GALLERY

As we discussed *back in Issue 30* (when he created our Year of the Rat cover), Dunbar always produces a physical piece of art when he works. With the lockdown in full effect when *Dragon+* speaks to him, we imagine either his walls being festooned with large fantasy visions or Max making frequent trips to drop work off in an underground bunker under his home.

“I live in an apartment so the closest thing I have to a vault of art beneath my home is a large bin of pages in a storage room that’s technically under my house—I have to go down a few levels to access the storage lockers. But most of my work is kept in a set of drawers that’s getting more and more cramped by the day,” he says.

“I use 11×17 Bristol paper when drawing comic books. I taped two of those sheets together so I could draw this scene featuring Drizzt and Guenhwyvar nice and large. I created the ink drawing and then scanned it in to do all the color work in Photoshop.”

At least the lockdown hasn't affected his ability to play D&D too much, and he's still torturing his **Dungeon Master Ricardo**. “We've been playing fairly regularly. It's amazing how well D&D works over video so Ricardo hasn't escaped us yet. The combat's smooth and all the narrative elements work well. The upside has been that we don't live that close to each other so getting home from one of our D&D sessions can take about an hour. Being able to say goodbye to everyone, switch off the computer, and go directly to bed is really nice. If someone asked me which I prefer, being in the room with people is better. But it's comforting to realize that if friends moved away we could continue playing because this has worked so well.”

You can see more of Max Dunbar's work on [his website](#) and in the pages of [IDW's Dungeons & Dragons comic](#), and connect with him on [Twitter](#). The Dungeons & Dragons Drizzt & Guenhwyvar Premium Action Figure is released in December 2020 with an MSRP of \$39.99. It's available to [preorder now](#) exclusively on Hasbro Pulse.

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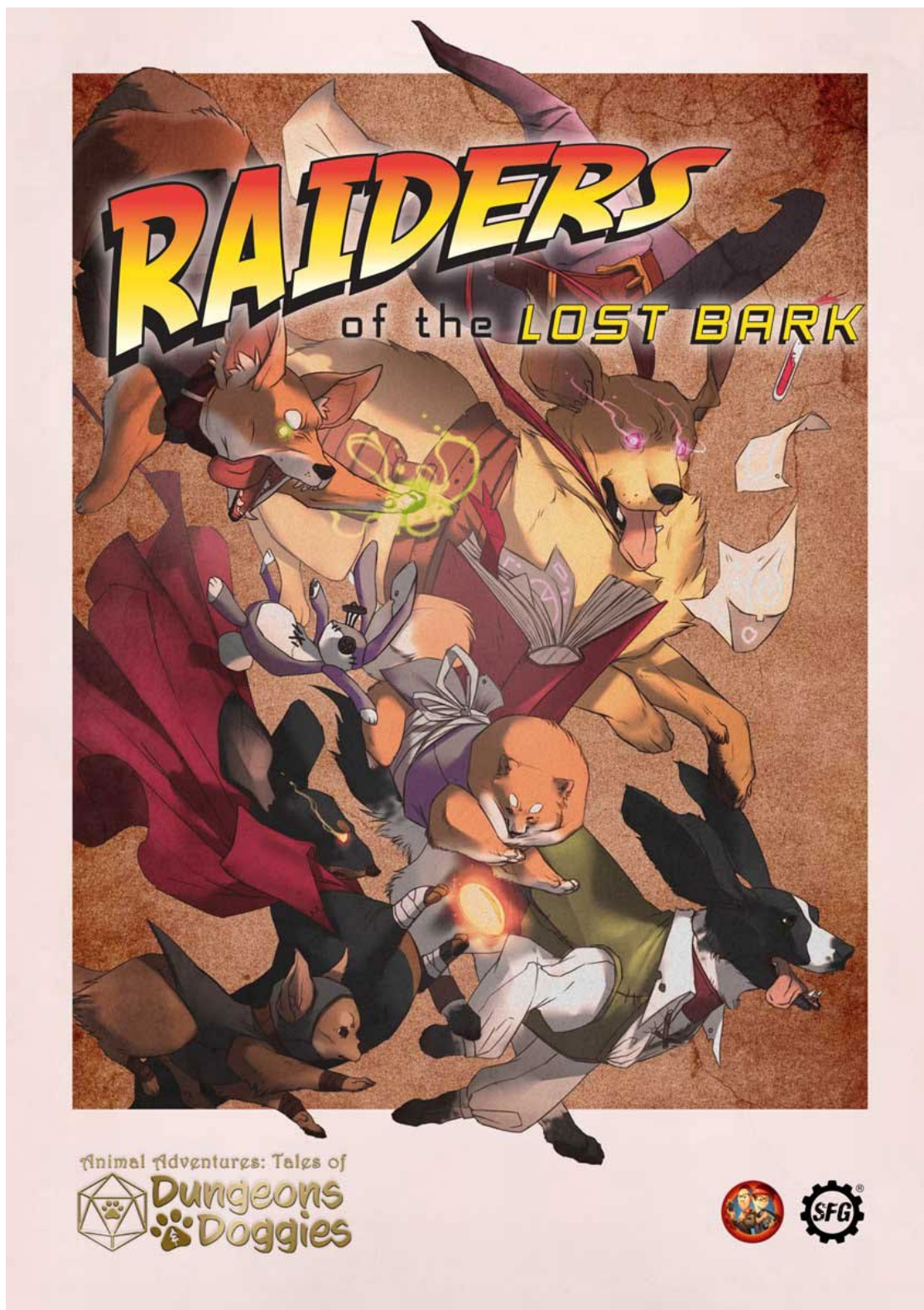
Dungeons and Doggies

What's better than a spelling bee? A talking dog! Animal-loving creators April Prime and Russ Charles offer unique options for your next D&D character.

by Mira Manga

Seasoned adventurers know how quickly a standard dungeon delve can turn into a tour of all things bizarre and bewildering. Gelatinous cubes, mimics, seven charismatic voice actors—you never know what you'll encounter down the next passage. Many a shaggy dog story is shared with any tavern dweller who wanders within earshot but one of the best involves an *actual* dog. Golden retriever Cornelius isn't a Beast Master ranger, a wild shaped druid, or an adventurer's best friend gone astray—he's an awakened animal with a taste for derring-do who's decided to venture into the dungeons!

Animal Adventures: Dungeons and Doggies is the brainchild of dog-loving-duo April Prime and Russ Charles. The idea first took shape as part of an art swap the pair engaged in: Russ (the official sculptor of *Critical Role* minis at Steamforged) would fashion something for April, and April would send him a character illustration in return.



(Select to view)

“I was imagining April would send me a tiefling bard or an elven druid,” Charles recalls, “And then this image of a dog wearing a massive Gandalf-style hat and lots of bags and pouches came through. He was casting *mage hand* but his version was a glowing purple paw. The moment I saw it, it was a genuine lightbulb moment.”

The character in question was Cornelius, a golden retriever wizard lovingly imagined into being by Prime as a talking and fully cognizant D&D character. The inspiration for this wizarding pooch came from a French animated series called *Watch My Chops*, which first aired in 2003.

“As a kid I watched a cartoon that featured a talking dog named Cornelius. He had the intelligence of a human and could speak flawlessly,” Prime remembers. “Much later, as an adult, I saw the movie *Up*, which featured another talking golden retriever called Dug. What I loved about Dug was that he still had the worldview of a dog. Rules were still important to him and he would sit if you told him to. I also loved the way he spoke because I imagine that’s the way that a dog would process speech. And that’s how Cornelius the golden retriever was born!

“I almost only ever play wizards in D&D. I’m slowly making my way through every single school of magic and I hit upon Divination. I decided that because Cornelius is a golden retriever, the idea is that he retrieves information about people and places. When he was awakened, every single piece of information in the universe was unveiled to him. But because he’s a dog, he didn’t really care. The secrets of the universe are totally available but he’d rather chase a ball!”

DOGGIES DAWNING

Cornelius’ appearance in Charles’ inbox sparked a flurry of communications between the creators, despite them being in opposing time zones (Prime in Australia, Charles in the UK). *Animal Adventures* is a world where dogs, cats, and other animals fight alongside the fifth edition races to tell their own epic stories. “The pitch was simply, ‘You can play as dogs in D&D!’” Russ explains. That led to the creation of stats for different types of dog, taking into

account whether they were small, medium, or large.

One of the first things Prime did was look to dogs in our world for inspiration. She notes that there's a rich history of humans using canines as police dogs and for search and rescue.



(Select to view)

“For their outfits, I mostly looked at what dogs wear in those kinds of roles. I also looked at armor that dogs have worn in the real world, such as the historical barding the Romans used with their war dogs. That might be huge, spiked collars and armor with more spikes running down its back,” the **former *Dragon+* cover artist** reveals.

As April outlined her ideas on how roleplaying a dog would work in practice, the pair began drawing up the famous doggie dozen that Russ would lovingly sculpt into miniatures. Powered by a successful crowdfunding campaign in July 2018, those twelve minis were put into production. A companion rulebook containing classes, back stories, doggie-specific magic items, and adventures was also released to entice players and DMs into a canine state of mind and help them feel their way when it comes to posing as a pup.

LESS BITE

The important thing for players to keep in mind is that these characters aren't simply pets. The doggies populating these stories are “awakened” animals, making them self-aware and fully sentient, with their own motivations, backstories, and desires. Woe betide the NPC who offers a, “Good doggie, roll over!” to any of these super smart hounds!

Yet *Dungeons and Doggies* weaves its greatest magic when the emphasis is on fun. A slew of expert-level doggie puns and humor run throughout its literature, with titles such as *Raiders of the Lost Bark* and *Who'll Let The Dogs Out* just the tip of the iceberg (shout out to magic items the *cone of shame* and *Barley's ball of fetching*—the latter being a ball that throws itself).



(Select to view)

And in *Dungeons and Doggies* all of the playable characters are loyal and pure of heart, which makes it the perfect antidote to what has so far been a challenging 2020.

“If people want to inject some darkness into their games featuring awakened animals, they can. But when you are playing as a dog,

there will always be moments of levity because you're in a world not made for paws. It's surprising how hard it is to be edgy when the rogue is a chihuahua and is only four inches tall. It's a wonderful image that cuts through any suggestion of 'grim' energy."

"That said, our latest adventure, *Secrets of Gullet Cove*, includes our first ever evil canine character," chips in Charles. "The Necromastiff is an evil necromancer who lives in an abandoned mansion and has raised an army. It's very *Scooby-Doo*!"

RUNNING WITH A PACK

Despite being set in a fantasy world, *Dungeons and Doggies* carefully reproduces the way pooches would experience their surroundings. Trying to recreate actions that humanoid characters would take for granted can get out of hand (or should we say paw...) very quickly.

"Look no hands. Literally, no hands!" Prime offers with a laugh. "Part of the fun about playing awakened animals in general is getting into the character. It's fun to watch players realize that they can't open a door as easily as they would if they were playing a humanoid. As an animal, they have to get creative but it's not impossible. Look at how adept service dogs are at manipulating human environments, such as opening doors, turning on lights, and picking things up with their mouths.

"Humanoid players might also come to depend on their canine attributes. Perhaps the dwarven cleric can't get the information she needs from the town guard, but as an awakened animal you can get information from the horse the same guard patrols on all day. These animals hear everything that we do. And with the incredible sense of smell that they have, dogs can interrogate sewage and pick up clues with their noses. A whole different world opens up when you get to play a dog."

"Everyone understands how dogs behave, but we didn't create *Dungeons and Doggies* in its own little bubble," Charles adds. "You can drop it into your regular D&D game and have the dogs be a juxtaposition or counter note flavor to whatever else is happening. If you want to play a cocker spaniel running around with a warforged in the streets of Eberron, you can!"

As much as dogs are able to fit in with any adventuring party, it's also possible to create a fifth edition party without an opposable thumb between them.

“At Gen Con in 2019 we discovered that the chihuahua miniature for Tedric the rogue fits on top of Cerysse the St Bernard cleric. Cerysse was therefore able to act as a mobile ramp to help the party reach higher places. Our players would also remove armor and other gear to look like ‘normal’ dogs so they could perform tricks in bars to hustle the patrons for gold. Then they’d use that money to pay for information. We ran a series of games with all canine parties that seemed to bring people so much joy, where everyone was smiling from start to finish.”



Revisit the time *Dragon+* got goofy and entertained the staff's dogs at the D&D offices.

MORE PAWS FOR THOUGHT

Following the success of *Dungeons and Doggies*—and by popular demand—*Tales of Cats and Catacombs* was also released. It's filled with the same spirit of fun, feline characters and cat-tastic content (and yes, there are just as many puns throughout).

“It writes itself,” Russ says with a grin. “I love that we’ve got a town

where the rooftops are connected by tiny planks and rope bridges. The cats have this whole network of streets, literal ‘catwalks’ all over the city.”

“There are layers and layers of world building that you can instantly insert into *Animal Adventure* game, because it already exists,” Prime agrees. “It’s often things that an all-humanoid party would never notice, this hidden world beneath their feet. Remember the twilight bark from the *101 Dalmatians* movie? A network of animals was communicating with each other and most humanoids just never cared to listen.”

Does the duo have a paw-sonal favorite? “We strive to not stereotype breeds in a bad way,” says Prime as she describes Angel, the pit bull cleric who uses a holy symbol of a sleeping female dog encircling her napping puppy, representing her doggy deity, The Good Mother. “Pit bulls are such sweet dogs and Angel’s this beautiful, little, chubby round meatball. Part of her design included angel wings on her outfit!”

“Mine is the cocker spaniel bard, Monty, because that is actually my dog!” adds Charles. “I love playing a support class and I love playing him. We came up with a bardic college for dogs called Amity. It’s a friendship-based college about helping everybody get along together.”

***Animal Adventures: Dungeons and Doggies* and *Animal Adventures: Tales of Cats and Catacombs* are available to buy now from **Steamforged Games**. *Animal Adventures: Secrets of Gullet Cove* will be available February 2021 and includes a full campaign setting, as well as introducing new cat and dog adventurers, monsters, and five immersive adventures for 1st to 5th level characters.**

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Adventure Cats and the Lost Pyramid of Hissar

Ask their owners—cats make the perfect predator. Or in this case, adventuring party. Presenting new fiction from Adam Lee, with illustrations by April Prime, bringing the cats of D&D into the game.

Speaking with April Prime and Russ Charles on the previous page started the gears turning in our minds. We've certainly seen (and heard) enough cats on the D&D team during our MS Teams chats these days! What would some of them be like in an adventuring party?

With a few key details, April kindly drew up several of these cats, which Adam Lee then used to create the following tale of their

adventures within a D&D campaign. We think it also makes a fine bedtime story for any younger gamers in your life. Enjoy—and look for the conclusion (and a few further animal friends) next issue!

CHAPTER 1

The Vision

Penny, Coop, Zoe, and the group of chipmunks that hired them all watched as the Great Zeldini looked into the green depths of the Emerald Eye. The fist-sized gem was an ancient faerie artifact given to Zeldini by her patron, the archfey Maorima, and through the gem she could contact her patron and receive insights and visions. Zeldini's blue eyes now glowed even brighter with magic and her ears were alert as she gazed into the swirling mists within the crystal.

Being shy, woodland creatures, the chipmunks all trembled until finally their leader, Milton, got up enough pluck to ask. "Is this how she will find our friends?"

"It is," Zoe answered. "Zeldini has a powerful friend in the Feywild who can see into hidden places. If anyone can find your missing friends, it's Zini."

As if on cue, Zeldini fully entered a trance. Penny, Coop, Zoe, and the chipmunks all watched as Zeldini closed her eyes and began her rhythmic purring. "There she goes," Zoe said. "It's trance time."

Zeldini's mind was transported from their room above Toadstool Tavern to a cold, dark, stone hallway that smelled like damp earth and smoke. Bugs scurried about the cracks in the stone walls and across the dirt floor and Zeldini resisted the instinct to pounce on them. *Focus, Zini*, she told herself. She looked down a long hallway that ended in a dimly lit opening from which she heard hammering and clattering. Unlike most cats, loud noises didn't faze Zeldini one little bit. When other cats ran for cover, she would be as cool as Icewind Dale and stare whatever it was in the face. Perhaps that's why the Great Zeldini became a warlock—she was always more curious than skittish.



Coop

She moved down the hallway and looked into a cavern as big as a coliseum. It was lit by lanterns—some that were hung from ropes that dangled from the ceiling while others were fixed to the stone walls. But what Zeldini saw in the middle of the room made her ears flatten. There, she saw none other than **Professor Whiskerweird**, his signature

scraggly fur and whiskers sticking out at all angles from his head. He stood atop a stone podium before a cage filled with quivering chipmunks that were occasionally poked and prodded by Whiskerweird's doltish assistant, Noofus, who laughed and made faces at the distraught forest critters.

"Pathetic chipmunks," Whiskerweird addressed his shuddering captives. "You are about to become participants in a glorious feat of genius!"

The chipmunks quivered and looked at each other with uncertainty.

"Noofus! Open the cage!"

"Yes, boss! Open the cage!" Noofus unlocked the iron padlock and swung the iron gate open.

"Noofus. These chipmunks are perfect for working on the hard to get to places and the finer details of my masterpiece. Make sure they follow my schematics closely." Whiskerweird then turned to the chipmunks. "Now, get to work, or I shall reduce you and your friends to acorn-scented ash!"

Whiskerweird held a wand aloft that blazed with eldritch fire. The arc from the wand lit the room and for an instant Zeldini could see the nearly complete framework of a massive, metallic dog the size of a small house. There were other forest creatures—squirrels, rabbits, moles, and otters—already working on the giant dog construct, directed and tormented by a small, snaggletoothed cat in a metal helmet, no doubt Whiskerweird's other assistant, Nod. The new chipmunk conscripts picked up their tiny tools and began to shuffle, single file to the colossal dog, all the while being menaced and cajoled by Noofus.

Zeldini felt the urge to hiss and pounce on the villain, but the trance began to weaken. As the spell's effects dwindled, her mind's eye began to move back to her companions. As her vision faded, she was left with the dim-witted chortling of Noofus and the growing, maniacal laughter of Professor Whiskerweird over the clink clank of a hundred tiny tools at work.



“Well, what did you see?” Penny and Coop said as Zeldini blinked her eyes and came back to the warmth of the room. A fire crackled in the hearth.

“I saw where they all went,” Zeldini said. The chipmunks all squeaked with delight. “But I don’t know where they are.”

“Excellent! Wait... you don’t know where they are?” Zoe said. The chipmunk’s tiny faces all fell in unison.

“It was underground, like a huge cavern or dungeon. But, get this, who should be there directing the whole thing? Professor Whiskerweird!” Everyone gasped except the chipmunks who looked at one another, confused.

“I saw him there being a total dretch-face with his two dretchy dum dums,” Zeldini said.

“Whiskerweird!” Zoe made that rowling sound she made when ticked off.

“Why would he steal a bunch of these adorable little guys?” Coop said, as he put a big paw on the head of a chipmunk and ruffled it.



Penny

“He’s forcing them to work on some kind of giant mechanical dog—and if it’s a dog, you know it can’t be good,” Zeldini spat.

“How the heck are we gonna find them?” Penny said, as she scratched behind her ear.

“My patron shows me only what she wants to. I can try again later,” Zeldini said.

The chipmunks all looked at each other. After a pause, a tiny chipmunk named Tip held up two coins and said with a lisp, “I thaved up thum cointh. Can you thave our friendth?” All the other chipmunks took Tip’s lead and began to hold up a coin or two with hope in their eyes.

“Keep your coins, little buddies, we’re gonna pound this scraggly cat and get your pals and all the missing forest creatures back,” Coop said, punching a fist into his paw. “All we gotta do is find him.”

“I can talk to the Crow,” Zoe said. “If anyone knows what Whiskerweird is up to, it will be her.”

“The Crow? She could help,” Zeldini agreed.

“Who’th the Crow?” asked Tip.

“She’s a really old and wise bird who all my crow friends talk about,” Zoe explained to the chipmunks, “... but there’s one problem. She lives in the center of Longshadow Forest.”

“Oh, cats. That place is super dangerous,” Coop said.

“But it’s all we’ve got for now,” Zeldini added. “Can we get a guide?”

“I’ll see if my crow pals know a way in. It helps that I can totally speak fluent crow. Rrrroowww!” Zoe grinned.

“Well, what are we waiting for?” Penny said, as she hopped onto a chair and pointed to the door. “Let’s go see this Crow.”

CHAPTER 2

Professor Whiskerweird

Professor Whiskerweird walked into his laboratory with his assistant Noofus and Nod, who scurried close to Professor Whiskerweird and

gazed at their master with admiration. Noofus suddenly recognized the fluffy ball that bobbed on a wire spring that came from his hat and began to bat it. Whiskerweird slapped his assistant's paw. "Pockets, Noofus! We have much work to do and I need you to focus." Noofus jammed his paws into his pockets but stayed mesmerized by the bobbing fluff-ball.

"Noofus. Nod. I am making history." As Whiskerweird said "history", he pulled a giant lever which parted a set of thick, black curtains. Behind the curtains was a map of Hamster Hill, a place sacred to all cute, furry critters for miles around. An arrow pointed to the hill and above the arrow was written in big, red letters, "Dig Site."

"Ooooh. History! Sounds wonderful, boss." Noofus danced about the map.

"Yes Noofus, it is... wonderful," Whiskerweird said as he beheld his map. "You see, I had a vision. A vision that will propel me to heights of power undreamed of. I shall be the new Cat Lord!"

"Visshunz!" Nod said reaching up toward the ceiling as if caught in a vision of his own.

"Yes, my dim-witted Noddle. The multiverse will be at my paw pads. All that is in my way is the mound of dirt that is Hamster Hill, but my mechanized malamute will soon be finished, and then we shall dig up... destiny." With another yank of the lever, a new map unfurled. It showed a giant pyramid buried under Hamster Hill. "Behold! The Lost Pyramid of Hissar!"

"Awwww yisss!" Nod said.

Noofus jumped with glee. "We're gonna live in a pyramid!"

"No, my painfully dull friend, the pyramid is not the prize. It is what's inside the pyramid that is of utmost importance."

"Kibblz!" Nod clapped his paws together with excitement.

Whiskerweird restrained the urge to blast Nod from existence. "If you had read *Balzengraf's Arcane Histories*, you would know that the Pyramid of Hissar was the rumored resting place of the Orbulon,

a gem that has the power to control minds.”

Nod looked confused. “Mindz?”

“Dear Nod. Endeavor to focus your pea-sized brain for just one single moment and see if you can imagine the potential. With the Orbulon and my genius, I can create a device to enhance its power and take control of multiple minds—as many as I wish! There won’t be a cat or creature around that will not bow to my will. Observe!”

Whiskerweird now pulled a different lever to reveal a schematic of his Orbulon Device, complete with fashionable headgear and command staff. Lines were drawn radiating from the headgear (which Whiskerweird was depicted wearing) to the heads of all kinds of cats and other creatures drawn with staring, vacant eyes.

Nod stood, uncomprehending as Noofus clapped like a circus seal, a joyful tear glittered in his eye. “Wonderful, boss. Wonderful.”

CHAPTER 3

Longshadow Forest

The party of cats followed their guide, Krork, for two days into the dark of Longshadow. Krork was a wily crow that said he knew the way to the Crow’s domain, although he hadn’t been back for quite some time. Zeldini was on high alert, as she had read accounts that the forest was magical and had a habit of changing and confusing travelers. Legend was that the spirit of the forest was lonely and didn’t want living beings to take their warmth from its cold canopy.

They crossed slow moving streams of clear, cold water and walked around long-forgotten ruins of some ancient temple complex. Eroded stones in the shape of snake-headed warriors and sinuous dragons put the cats on edge. Their ears twisted every which way and their eyes were pools of night that soaked up every bit of light and every twitch of motion. They smelled many dangers on the way, a whiff of a kobold den, the scent of undeath, the miasma of some deadly ooze. Zeldini constantly shook and licked her paws and Coop’s head was on a swivel, paws up, ready to punch whatever jumped out at him. Zoe was almost grabbed by a carnivorous vine as she chattered with

Krork, but Penny pounced on the thing and severed it with her sharp teeth and claws. They saw zombified forest creatures, animated by some ancient wizard, standing motionless in the mists, awaiting their next order that would never come. They also picked their way through the deathtrap of a giant spider's web that was strewn across their path. It was either that or lose a day's travel.



Zoe

Halfway into the second day, they heard Krork make a sound from far ahead that echoed back to them through the trees. Even for those who didn't understand the crow's raucous language, they could tell that they had arrived. Zoe gave a grin and a "thumbs up" and dashed ahead to see Krork.

As the rest of the band came around the side of the hill, they could make out a rough path through the forest gloom. The path became more defined as it led up toward a huge pile of thick vines and tree limbs that stacked and twisted together to form a tall, precarious tower looming overhead. The limbs that formed the tower were black and slick from the mists of the forest, and the tangled structure looked like a writhing pillar of black snakes that reached up above the snarled branches of the canopy.

“Holy cats,” Coop said.

“You’re not kidding,” Zeldini whispered.

They walked up the hill to the foot of the tower that rose like the trunk of some enormous, gnarled tree.

“Uhhh. Where do we knock?” Penny said.

“Krork said he knows where the entrance is,” Zoe said and waved to her companions.

They followed Zoe over thick, slippery, root-like branches and through tangles of thorny vines to a tunnel that sloped upward into the tower. The way was treacherous, the floor was made of wet limbs and more than once a paw slipped through making the party stop with a gasp. Krork flapped and cawed encouragement and Zeldini wished she had some *‘nip of flying* to keep her paws off the slippery wet wood. After a few bumps and bruises, the cats exited the dank tunnel into a circular hall of interlaced branches. Even with their darkvision, the cats could barely make out the dimensions. It was as if the shadows were made of liquid blackness that flowed and shifted as they moved further into the room, confusing their vision and its true proportions.

“Uhhh. This place is weird,” Penny said.

“Krork, what’s going on?” Zoe asked as Krork flew up and landed on a thick branch that grew out from the walls of the room. The cats instinctively drew closer together as the shadows peeled off the wall to wrap themselves around Krork’s body. The crow seemed to grow in size as more and more of the shadows added layer upon layer of

feathery darkness to it until they swirled and unfurled to reveal an enormous, otherworldly crow with glowing eyes.

“Hello,” said the Crow.

“Woah.” Zeldini’s heart was thumping. At the next gathering of warlocks, she was going to have *the best* story.

“Wait... you mean that you were Krork the whole time?” Coop said.

“I am all crows,” said the Crow.

What will the Crow reveal? Can anyone stop the machinations of Professor Whiskerweird? And just what cat-astrophic events will the Orbulon Device bring about (sorry, we just couldn’t help ourselves)? Be sure to check back next issue for the exciting conclusion to this tale!

As an added bonus, Adam created the first two cats from the story as playable characters:

[DOWNLOAD ZELDINI](#)

[DOWNLOAD ZOE](#)

About the Author

Adam Lee is an adventure writer, narrative designer, and all-around story guy for Dungeons & Dragons.

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Solo Adventure: Frozen Offerings

Party of one? Grab yourself a sidekick and brave Icewind Dale's frozen climes in our solo adventure.

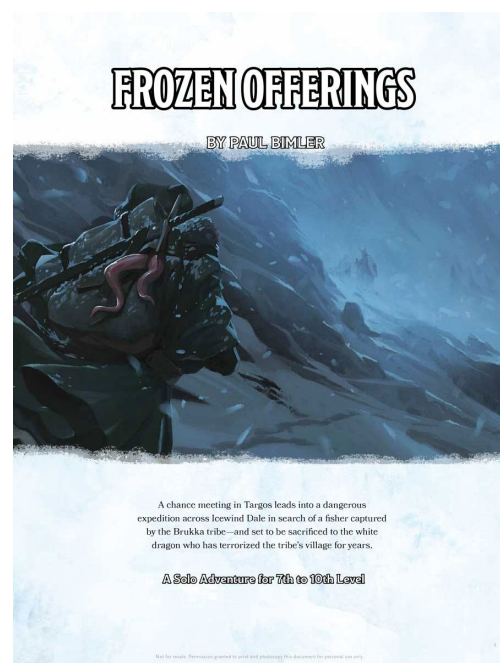
Dungeons & Dragons has embraced solo play since its earliest editions, allowing dungeon doors to be kicked open even when there's no-one else around to play. We chatted with author Paul Bimler about this growing field of gaming in [Issue #32](#) and as he was kind enough to share his knowledge on the best way to build a module meant for one, we had him construct an Icewind Dale-based mission especially for *Dragon+*!

Frozen Offerings is a solo (DM-less) quest designed for a fifth edition character of level 7-10. Players read text entries with multiple potential outcomes, make decisions for their characters, and are then directed to further situations and occasional combat encounters.

All of the instructions players need can be found in the PDF below, including combat

instructions for both yourself and a premade sidekick (you'll find Thalgar's stat block after the main body of adventure text). You can also download basic maps to print out and help you keep track of the battles.

Since you'll be equipping your character with regular starting gear according to class and background, and also have the opportunity to buy items from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, we suggest you choose wisely. As Bimler sagely proposes, "Take the opportunity to pick up some *potions of healing*. You are going to need them."



(Select to view)

[DOWNLOAD FROZEN OFFERINGS](#)

[DOWNLOAD THE COMBAT MAPS](#)

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FROZEN OFFERINGS

BY PAUL BIMLER



A chance meeting in Targos leads into a dangerous expedition across Icewind Dale in search of a fisher captured by the Brukka tribe—and set to be sacrificed to the white dragon who has terrorized the tribe's village for years.

A Solo Adventure for 7th to 10th Level

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Frozen Offerings*, a solo (DM free) adventure written especially for issue 34 of *Dragon+*. This solo adventure is played just like a game book: you read through text entries, make decisions, and are then directed to further text entries, and occasional combat encounters.

Frozen Offerings is set in Icewind Dale, and is designed for a character of 7th to 10th level and a premade sidekick. This sidekick, Thalgar, is introduced during the backstory, and his stat block is located at the end of the adventure text. During combat, you control your character, Thalgar, and any monsters you encounter, making the rolls for all of them. Custom combat sheets at the back of the adventure direct you in how to manage the encounters. If Thalgar becomes unconscious during combat, rather than making death saves, he simply drops to zero hit points. After the encounter finishes (if your character is still alive), Thalgar gains 1 hit point and can heal. If both your character and Thalgar are reduced to 0 hit points, the quest is lost and you must roll up another character and try again!

YOUR CHARACTER

To start, create a character of 7th to 10th level, equipping them with regular starting gear according to class and background. When considering what level to make your character, think about how much of a challenge you would like this adventure to be. Level 7 presents a very tough challenge but is certainly possible—and perhaps fun for those who revel in tactics and testing the effectiveness of various character builds. Choose a higher level (9th or 10th) if you simply want to enjoy the story without your character's fate always teetering on a knife edge.

The author recommends that you create an 8th-level character. This makes for a solid challenge, but not an overwhelming one.

Regardless of level, your character starts with 500 gp + (1d10 × 25 gp) and one uncommon magic item of your choice from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you do not possess the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, use the [System Reference Document](#) or the [D&D Basic Rules](#), both of which are available from the Wizards of the Coast website. You can also use your gold to buy anything you wish from the equipment lists in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*. Take the opportunity to pick up some *potions of healing*, as you're going to need them. A few additional items are listed for purchase at the start of the adventure.

Use point buy or the standard array for your character's ability scores. If you wish to make this quest slightly easier on them (and it has been written to be a significant challenge, with death a very real possibility), you can use the optional rule for taking maximum hit points for your character at each level.

And that's all you need to prepare for this adventure.

PLAYING A SOLO ADVENTURE

Frozen Offerings is similar to many of the author's other adventures, such as [The Tortured Land](#) and [Drums at Dagðerford](#). However, because this is a much

shorter quest, it is more linear than those adventures, which generally provide several possible paths. Still, your choices affect the outcomes of situations and can increase your chances of victory, including such things as befriending a crucial ally, succeeding on an ability check, or gleaning vital information. At times, your successes might grant you codewords that will be activated later in the adventure, granting you advantage during an encounter or other challenge.

You can take actions as you desire to cast spells, use features and traits, heal your characters, and do anything as normally allowed within the D&D rules. You do not need to be prompted by the text, in or out of combat, to do such things. However, you may not take a rest unless prompted by the text.

This adventure makes use of [Sidekicks Essentials](#) by [Paul Metzger](#), which is available on the Dungeon Master's Guild.

Your Dungeon Master might give you this quest as a side adventure to complete between larger quests, or it can be inserted into a larger solo campaign.

If you wish to embark on this quest with two characters in addition to the provided sidekick, then create those characters at 3rd or 4th level. If you wish to use three characters, make them 2nd or 3rd level. Decide between those levels based on how much of a challenge you want the quest to be. However, be aware that because the adventure is designed for a single higher-level character, playing it with multiple characters might create some balance issues.

Good luck! And may the gods be on your side as you journey through the frozen landscape of Icewind Dale!

FROZEN OFFERINGS

Flurries of snow swirl around you and your traveling companions as your cart rumbles toward the walled city of Targos, which stands defiant against the relentless cold of Icewind Dale. The driver half-turns his head back toward his passengers. "Wolf's Pelt Inn is where you'll be wanting to stay. My cousin Yertram runs it, and he makes the best fish stew in all Ten-Towns. Knucklehead trout. You won't get it fresher anywhere else!"

The gates are quickly opened for the cart and you find yourself in a surprisingly busy little city. The streets of Targos, sheltered by high walls from the relentless winds of Icewind Dale, are home to merchants of every kind plying their trade—fishmongers, blacksmiths, weaponsmiths, tailors, tinkers, makers of survival gear, and more.

The driver drops you at the Wolf's Pelt Inn, and you and several others make your way inside, where a fire pit keeps the interior cozily warm. Starving after a whole

PLAYTESTERS

Frozen Offerings was playtested by the following brave adventurers: Randall Right, Jemma Kline, Simon Henry, Garth Jones, Jessica Laurent, Christopher Logue, Austin Butcher, and Bob Von Gruenigen. A huge thanks to those players for their time and input in making sure this adventure was properly balanced. If you enjoy *Frozen Offerings*, please check out the [author's other products](#) on the DMs Guild.

day's travel, you tuck into a bowl of Yertram's legendary fish stew, and are soon feeling much happier with warm feet and a full belly.

It is not long, however, before curiosity gets the better of you, and you head back onto the streets of Targos for a look around.

While browsing in a weaponsmith's shop, you overhear a conversation between the shopkeeper and a burly looking bearded northerner clad head to toe in thick furs. A huge greataxe is strapped across his back.

"Surely you can spare me one son, Rhia!" the warrior says in a pleading tone. "What about Osrick?"

"I need him here," the middle-aged shopkeeper says flatly. "With Killian dead, I've no one else to help me run the forge and make repairs. You know this. He's sharpened your axe countless times!"

"Rodrick, then. You can spare him."

"He's his own master now, Thalgar! He doesn't live under this roof any more. Runs a boat of his own, and he's out on the lake every day. I doubt he'll be willing to come with you on your fool's errand!"

"Fool's errand?" the warrior growls. "That's my brother you're talking about."

The shopkeeper is quiet for a long moment. Then, in a softer tone, she says. "We both know, Thalgar ... Malgar is probably dead already."

The warrior doesn't reply. He merely turns and slumps toward the door, looking utterly dejected.

"Wait," you say, stepping into his path. The warrior stops, regarding you with a glimmer of hope in his eye. "What's this about your brother?" you ask.

A smile flickers over his face. "My brother Malgar. He's a fisher. Went on an expedition four days ago with a friend. Only the friend returned. And the tale he had to tell ..."

"What happened to him?"

Thalgar sighs deeply, looking at the ground and shaking his head. "Malgar was caught by the Brukka tribe. Savage barbarians. They live on the western shore of Maer Dualdon."

"Everyone knows of the Brukka tribe," the shopkeeper chimes in. "They live under the shadow of a white dragon who's been terrorizing their village for years. Cowards, the lot of them. If enough of them got together, they could defeat the thing I reckon, but they're superstitious, those Brukka. They offer one of their old or infirm every month to appease the dragon. But lately ... they've been running low on offerings."

Thalgar nods, confirming the story. "So they've taken Malgar. They justified it by saying he was taking more than his quota of knucklehead. But they've never complained about it before!"

"And you want to rescue him, eh?" you ask.

"I do," Thalgar says fervently.

"And you need help."

"Aye, I do."

There's a pause. Then you shrug. "Well? What's in it for me?" you ask jovially, breaking the silence.

Thalgar frowns, looking at the ground again. "Well, I don't have much gold. But I bet Malgar would be pretty grateful. Probably enough to offer you a share in his business, which is worth something."

The woman coughs. "Not likely," she mumbles under her breath, drawing a scowl from Thalgar.

"I can offer my life savings," Thalgar says. "Close to five hundred gold. Will that do the trick?"

You smile at the warrior. He seems desperate, and you don't doubt he'll pay you the gold to help him rescue his brother. There are no wealthy nobles offering large bounties for quests up in these parts. Just simple people living their simple lives. But lately, you've been itching for a chance to test your adventuring prowess, and there might be loot to be had in a quest against a dragon—even over and above what Thalgar and his brother can offer you.

You treat Thalgar to a wide grin, then clap the warrior on the shoulder. "When do we leave?"

Now go to entry 1 to begin your quest!

ADVENTURE ENTRIES

This section contains the individual entries that will shape your adventure. Each entry narrates the story for your character, and often presents choices and challenges that you undertake. The end of each entry tells you which entry to read next, often sending you to different entries depending on your character's choices.

1. SHOPPING EXPEDITION

Before you depart on your quest to rescue Thalgar's brother from the Brukka barbarians, you might want to pick up some special items in Targos. Peruse the list below and consider what you might like to take with you on your quest. As your time is limited, you will only be able to inspect and purchase three of the following items.

- Snowshoes, two pairs (10 gp)
- Climber's kit (25 gp)
- Snow glasses (5 gp)



- Llama wool undershirt (15 gp)
- Knucklehead oil (15 gp)

As you peruse these items, you start a back-and-forth with one merchant, which seems to irk Thalgar.

“Come on!” Thalgar says. “There is no time to waste shopping. Get the items you need and let’s get to the docks! Utrirr’s boat is leaving soon, and we must not miss it. There might not be another boat leaving today!”

You are eager to take a little time to consider your purchases or haggle with the merchant so that you can get a better price, but Thalgar isn’t helping by rushing you.

To ignore Thalgar’s impatience and haggle with the merchants, turn to entry 30.

To heed Thalgar’s words and depart for the docks, turn to entry 15.

2. RELUCTANT MOUNTS

Despite your best efforts, these horses will not be ridden right now—at least not by you. You abandon this plan and quickly make your way toward the village gate, and out onto the plain.

Go to entry 65.

3. COLD COMFORT

As the sun heats the tundra, you begin to hear a cracking, creaking noise. Too late, you look ahead to where Thalgar is and watch as the ice gives way beneath him, the warrior plunging through it.

Keeping your tread as light as possible, you rush to the hole where Thalgar fell. He’s clinging on to the edge of the ice but is already shaking, his teeth chattering loudly. You need to get him out of the numbingly cold water quickly, then get him warm if he is to survive.

The first task is achieved fairly easily. You haul Thalgar out of the water and the two of you carefully make your way off the ice sheet to the relative safety of the snow. Then you quickly get to work.

Do you possess knucklehead oil or a llama wool undershirt?

If you possess either or both of these items, go to entry 26.

If you possess neither, go to entry 49.

4. UNEXPECTED AID

You watch and wait, noticing one warrior who seems to always linger on the periphery of the hall. Paying close attention to her facial features, you see that she does not laugh when the others do, nor does she always voice her agreement. She seems to have a mind of her own—or at least that’s what you hope.

Slowly, things begin to quiet down in the longhouse, and many of the warriors depart. The one you’ve been watching seems to be sleeping within the longhouse, however, and she beds down nearby.

Cautiously, quietly, you come near, gently grasping her arm. She turns her head toward you, and her eyes immediately go wide with recognition, as if she had been expecting this contact.

“I don’t agree with this superstition. This sacrifice,” she says. “Just so you know.”

You nod urgently, glancing around to make sure your conversation isn’t overheard. “We need help,” you say.

“We have no way of tracking the party that’s taken my friend’s brother to the dragon’s lair.”

Your new ally smiles softly. “It is simple,” she whispers. “Whitetooth is the name of the peak where the dragon Angnath has her lair. Keep that peak in your sights at all times, and you will be following the party. And do not make for the Trident Peak. That will lead you astray.”

Thanking the warrior for this vital information, you return to your bedroll and an expectant Thalgar, quietly relating to him all that you have learned.

To wait until nightfall and then leave the village, turn to entry 69.

To stay the night (taking a long rest) and leave early the next morning, go to entry 14.

5. MYSTERY FIGURE

“What is it?” you ask.

The woman frowns. “The survivor in that boat ... I think I know him. He looks like Thrayn. But no, it can’t be.”

“Why not?”

“Well, Thrayn went missing years ago. He was thought to have drowned. No one ever found his body, though.”

That is odd, without a doubt!

To relay this information to Utrirr, go to entry 63.

To hail the craft, go to entry 31.

6. THALGAR’S LEGACY

Malgar runs to the prone form of his brother. “No!” he cries, wrapping Thalgar in an embrace, and trying to lift his limp body from the floor.

You go to the poor fisher’s side and console him. “He died with honor, Malgar,” you say softly. “Let that be a consolation to you.”

“He died because of me!” Malgar sobs, and it is clear that he is inconsolable.

You too feel Thalgar’s passing keenly, even after only having known him for two days. Eventually, you leave Malgar to grieve his brother’s passing and begin exploring the rest of the cave.

In the far corner of the dragon’s lair, you find something incredible. Beneath a thick sheet of ice, as if encased in glass, is a hoard of sorts. It makes sense that a white dragon would store treasure this way.

While you begin chipping away at the ice, Malgar manages to set aside his grief for a time. He gets a fire started, collecting flammable material from around the cave: old clubs, a wagon wheel, discarded clothes, and other detritus. He sits, staring gloomily into the fire while you work at uncovering the hoard. This task makes you sweat, but as the temperature within the lair rises, the ice begins to melt, making your job easier.

Finally, you reach the treasure, and can claim the following: 785 cp, 420 sp, 2,088 gp, 105 pp, eleven 100 gp gems, a *potion of stone giant strength*, and a *necklace of fireballs*.

(You can take this hoard if you wish, or you can roll for your own custom hoard on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 5–10 table in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. If you decide to roll for your own hoard, you must accept the result of your rolls and take that hoard).

You cremate Thalgar there on the ledge above the plain, on Whitetooth Mountain. It takes two days for you

and Malgar to return to Targos, giving the Brukka village a wide berth. Malgar offers you the 500 gold Thalgar promised you, and bids you well on your travels.

"How can I ever repay you?" Malgar asks as you stand in the main street of Targos.

"Thalgar gave his life to rescue you, Malgar," you say. "Be sure to make his sacrifice worth it. Live the rest of your life well, and live long."

You depart Malgar's company and set out on your own once more, wondering what further adventures Icewind Dale has in store for you ...

Experience. If your Dungeon Master sent you on this quest, talk to them about whether they want to award you experience for this solo adventure or have you advance a level. In lieu of a DM decision, you can grant your character 5,000 XP (or divide that same amount among multiple characters). If you are feeling generous, you can instead decide to have each character advance one level.

Congratulations on successfully completing Frozen Offerings. Your adventure ends here!

7. STORM WATCH

Thalgar stops for a moment and raises a hand. "That doesn't look good," he says ominously, nodding to the south.

You look in that direction and see a huge, billowing white cloud advancing quickly toward you, like an army of ghostly warriors.

"Blizzard!" Thalgar shouts as the wind begins to pick up.

There is no time to erect a shelter. The whiteout soon engulfs you, and you cannot hear anything as the ferocious wind buffets your ears. Now and then, you fancy you can hear snatches of Thalgar's voice, and you try to figure out what direction it might be coming from.

Do you possess snow glasses?

If yes, go to entry 28.

If not, go to entry 43.

8. DARK TROPHIES

Drawing your weapon, you prepare for battle, but the ghastly-looking thing is motionless. Thalgar frowns, then cautiously moves forward, sticking out his greataxe and giving the body of the creature a tap. It connects with an audible 'tink.'

"Frozen solid!" Thalgar exclaims.

You look around, now noticing that the strange ice formations each contain a creature of some kind, frozen in its tracks. You've heard about this sort of thing before. This is the trophy graveyard of a white dragon. In front of you are a pair of saber-toothed tigers. Over there lies a huge winter wolf ...

"No!" Thalgar shouts, and you quickly run to his side. He stands before the frozen form of a Brukka barbarian, with several more nearby.

"The warrior party," you say. "The Brukka who were escorting Malgar to ..."

Thalgar begins running between the ice formations, desperately looking for his brother. You join in the search, checking each frozen column of ice. But apart from the Brukka, there are no other humanoids here.

"Maybe he managed to escape," Thalgar says hopefully.

"Or," you reply darkly, "maybe the dragon took Malgar straight to her lair."

Thalgar fixes you with a hard gaze, then turns southward toward the mountains.

"Even if that is so," he states firmly, "we cannot just leave. What if he is still alive somehow? We must try."

You put a hand on Thalgar's shoulder. "I'm with you." And indeed, over the course of this journey, you've become quite fond of the warrior, and genuinely want to help him. Besides, you don't abandon your word lightly, especially not after coming this far.

With renewed determination, you both press on, moving toward the two hulking mountains that rise to the south. The light is beginning to fade, and you must act quickly.

But which mountain holds the dragon's lair?

To make your way toward the fang-shaped mountain, go to entry 66.

To approach the mountain with three peaks like a trident, go to entry 42.

9. FALSE FRIENDS

"What's that?" Utrirr demands. "Thrayn, you say?" Quickly grabbing a spyglass from his hip, the captain extends it and trains it on the beleaguered fishing boat. "By the gods!" he exclaims. "It is Thrayn! But ... that cannot be! Thrayn is dead ..."

Fearing some undead trickery—or worse—you turn back toward the foundering craft, giving Thalgar a sly nod. The warrior's eyes go narrow with recognition, and you see his hand slowly go to the catch that secures the greataxe on his back.

Take the codeword **PREPARED**.

You glance at Utrirr, who has a steely look in his eye. The grizzled captain yells a command in the strange nautical language you heard him use before. In response, the crew all freeze and turn toward him. He yells the same command again, and the crew appear to ready themselves for action.

Aurora comes alongside the beleaguered fishing boat, heaving to. Watching the supposedly distressed figures in the boat, you are not surprised to see the figure previously huddled on the deck smoothly get to her feet, battleaxe in hand! Now that you are close, you see that these two tricksters have morphed into fish-like creatures. Malicious grins spread over their faces, as the axe fighter prepares to leap up onto *Aurora's* rail and the other throws their head back and emits an ear-splitting screech! From the water around you, other figures suddenly appear, clambering up onto *Aurora*. But you and Thalgar are already leaping into the fishing boat, ready to take on the leaders of this monstrous crew!

Go to the "Deep Scion Combat Sheet" section at the back of the adventure and do battle with these fishy fraudsters! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

10. SUCCESSION

You pull yourself up onto a wide, flat ledge, the huge maw of the cave mouth standing open before you. Great cracks in the mountain run hundreds of feet upwards, and grotesque formations in the pressurized, hardened rock evoke the images of all sorts of ghostly creatures.



You glance at Thalgar. His eyes are wide, his face set in grim determination. Looking back at you, he gives a nod, and the two of you move quietly forward toward the cave mouth. It is dark inside the cave, as night has almost completely descended, but a sound comes from within, echoing in the cavernous space beyond. The dragon's voice rasps and crackles like the sound of ice fracturing on the side of a mountain. But it strikes you as ... less impressive than you'd expected.

You both stop and listen, pressing yourself against the rock beside the entrance.

"Yes, she lies in the frozen wastes, the great Angnath! My tyrant of a mother, may she rot in the Nine Hells!"

A young dragon? Angnath is gone? Perhaps this fight won't be as deadly as you were expecting!

And then another voice speaks. "You killed her?" it asks meekly.

"Malgar!" Thalgar whispers, a glimmer of hope entering his eyes. The dragon has kept Malgar alive for some reason.

"Of course. It is the way in our family. When the child comes of age, the older parent is killed off, and the tradition is maintained. The Brukka bring their monthly sacrifice, and in return we spare their pitiful little village from our breath's devastation." Then the dragon gives a chilling laugh. "But I care nothing for this ... empty tradition! I want to travel the dale, far and wide, to see what is beyond this sad little plain. So after I eat you and raze the Brukka village, I shall fly on. Perhaps to the human town that I know sits nearby ... but what is its name? Tell me of it, little one, for these tribesfolk are the

only humans I have ever talked to. And they are so very dull. Tell me of the lands beyond this plain, and this lake, and I may let you live a little longer. Who knows? I may even spare you! Although in truth, that is not very likely. And then I shall leave this cursed place! All Icewind Dale will fear the mighty Xakkrath!"

So the young white dragon Xakkrath, spawn of Angnath, has let Malgar live in order to learn more of the lands beyond this plain. But how long can Malgar keep talking? How extensive is his knowledge? A glance at Thalgar's face tells you he is thinking the exact same thing.

"He's never even left Targos," Thalgar whispers urgently. "Come on." The warrior motions you to follow him inside the cave, as stealthily as you can. (Glowing lichen creates enough light to see inside the cave, so don't be concerned if your character doesn't have darkvision.) But as you follow, you find yourself thinking that creating a diversion might be useful.

To creep stealthily inside the cave and try to surprise the dragon, go to entry 13.

To try to create a diversion to lure the dragon out, go to entry 39.

To simply stride in and confront the dragon, go to entry 73.

11. THE DRAGON SLAYERS

You are escorted into the center of the village by the mounted warriors, led to a long wooden building decorated with the skulls of all sorts of beasts. Mounting a set of stairs, you enter through the open doorway into

an interior lit by a large central fire pit. The Brukka tribesfolk, young and old, watch as you enter the longhouse, their distrust clear in their eyes. Some laugh openly, as if you and Thalgar are a couple of errant youths unaware of how foolish they appear. "Chief Ghudvil!" one of the warriors in your escort bellows out. "Visitors, from the town across the lake."

"Ah!" a voice booms from the far end of the room. "Come to barter for the life of the poacher, eh? Well, you're too late!"

Slowly, your eyes adjust to the firelight, and you see that the voice belongs to a hulking warrior whose great beard has a blue tint. "The prisoner has already been taken to Angnath's lair ..."

"Murderer!" Thalgar yells, starting toward the chief. "You condemn my brother to death, all for your cursed superstitions!" You grab Thalgar's arm, managing to restrain him. Flanking the barbarian chief, two warriors take a step forward, hands on the hilts of greatswords. "There's no point in arguing," you say under your breath. "We must gain information."

"Do not think of following," the chief warns. "You'll never catch them anyway. They are Brukka. They have lived their lives on these plains, and can navigate the ice as well as any native creature. You had best give up this foolishness, and scurry back to your home across the water."

Thalgar visibly rankles at the words, his eyes narrowing. Your grip on his arm tightens. "We will figure this out, Thalgar. Control your anger."

"And you should be proud!" the chief goes on. "The poacher gives his life for the noblest of causes. Keeping this village safe. Keeping disease at bay. For the wyrm must be appeased."

You take a step forward, bowing your head slightly. "Thank you for welcoming us into your longhouse, great chief," you say. "I have a question ... what if we were to pursue?"

The chief laughs. "I suppose you are welcome to try. But it is pointless. You'll never catch my warrior party."

You pause for effect—and then ask another question. "And what if we were to ... perhaps ... slay this dragon?"

There is silence—then shock at your audacity. Around the chief, warriors murmur among themselves. You do not know the Brukka dialect, and so you have no idea what they are saying, but you fancy you hear notes of incredulity.

"Impossible," the chief says dismissively. "The dread Angnath cannot be slain. The gods protect her. You will simply be eaten, no more, no less."

"But if we did," you say, persistent. "Imagine for a minute that we did slay Angnath. What then?"

The chief blows out a breath, frowning. "Then ... you would free this village from a bondage that has lasted centuries. But I tell you, it cannot be done!"

You bow your head. "We thank you, chief," you say deferentially. "If you will allow it, we will make camp in your village. We won't be a bother."

The chief waves a hand. "Stay in my longhouse," he says. "It is warm, and the night is cold. There are many bedrolls here, so sleep where you want. Dark is falling. I can tell you now, your quarry will not be journeying

through the night. You will lose no advantage by resting here."

You sense that the chief doesn't speak entirely truly. But still, you weigh his words carefully. Bowing your head once more, you step away.

The Brukka tribesfolk regard you differently now. When you pass, they move back a step, as if not certain what to make of you. Glancing at Thalgar, you see he is overcome with emotion, and you lead him away, sitting him down by a pair of bedrolls on the far wall of the longhouse.

"Calm yourself, Thalgar," you say. "I have a plan."

To wait until nightfall and then leave the Brukka village, turn to entry 69.

To rest the night (taking a long rest) and leave early the next morning, go to entry 14.

To search for possible allies, go to entry 54.

12. MAKING FOR SHORE

"They'll have to manage on their own," you tell Utrirr and Thalgar. "We can't waste any time."

Utrirr gives a short nod. Thalgar comes near and grasps your hand firmly. "Thank you, friend," he says. "You're right, there's no time to lose. Utrirr can see to that craft after he's dropped us off anyway."

Turning *Aurora* to port, Utrirr begins sailing for the western shore of Maer Dualdon, the crew rowing furiously to aid the ship's progress. You fancy you can see smoke plumes rising from the distant shore.

"The village of the Brukka tribe," Thalgar mutters. "That's where Malgar is." He looks at you, brow furrowed with worry. "I hope."

Utrirr mutters darkly, and you quickly see the reason. Thick gray clouds dominate the eastern sky, rolling over the town of Lonelywood on the far shore and quickly advancing across Maer Dualdon toward you. "Shelter," he mumbles thickly. "Western cove."

"Should we be worried?" you ask Thalgar.

The warrior shakes his head. "We'll beat it to shore. Utrirr will drop us near the Brukka village. Then he'll shelter in Knucklehook Cove and wait the storm out."

Turn to entry 70.

13. STEALTHY APPROACH

As quietly as you can, you creep inside the cavern entrance.

"Targos is one of the Ten-Towns," Malgar says, his voice quavering. "There's also Lonelywood, Bremen, Easthaven ..."

"But which is the biggest?" Xakkrath asks eagerly. "Which has the most people?"

There is a silence as Malgar considers this. *Keep talking*, you think, eager for noise to cover the sound of your footsteps.

"Well ... it might be Bryn Shander, perhaps ... or maybe Targos ... I ... I'm not sure ..."

You stand within an antechamber, not yet within the cavern proper. You risk a glance around a rocky outcrop, trying to get a bead on the dragon's position.

Make a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

If successful, go to entry 60.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 22.

14. TROUBLED REST

Gradually the Brukka village quiets down as the tribesfolk all head to their respective sleeping places. A bone-white moon hangs in the sky outside, visible through a small window. Every once in a while, you turn your head to track its slow progress, and each time you do so, the village has become quieter. The fire pit keeps the longhouse warm, and it seems that many of Ghudvil's warriors sleep here. Thalgar slumbers beside you, but the warrior's sleep is fitful and he tosses and turns, mumbling in his dreams.

Soon, the air is heavy with the sounds of snoring, but this doesn't keep you awake, and you too fall into a strangely deep sleep. In your dreams, you are haunted by visions of white wyrms and barren, empty plains, where you are lost and cannot seem to find a single landmark or feature to orient yourself.

(While you sleep, your character and Thalgar take a long rest.)

You awake just before dawn, as one of Ghudvil's warriors enters the longhouse to stoke the fire. After shaking Thalgar awake, the two of you are soon up and out the door, your breath frosting before you in the frigid air. No one notices as you slink through the Brukka village, headed for the west gate. At one stage, you notice two horses and consider stealing them—but then you notice a stablehand fetching their feed. She would surely raise the alarm, and who knows how these tribesfolk would react to your attempted theft?

You are soon out on the plain, breaking into a jog to keep the cold at bay.

"We'll make good time out of the wind," you say, trying to buoy Thalgar's spirits.

He nods, fixing you with a hard gaze. "Let's go get my brother," he says.

"That's the spirit!" Then the two of you put your heads down and surge forth across the frozen plain.

Go to entry 65.

15. ON BOARD

Following Thalgar, you make your way down to the docks of Targos, descending a pathway that zigzags down a high cliff face. As you reach the bottom, you see that the cliff shelters the docks from the relentless winds blowing from the south. It is quite serene down here, but the path is slippery—causing you to almost lose your footing more than once!

Finally, you reach the bottom and survey the scene before you. Most of the boats that you see have their sails rolled up, oars shipped, and all equipment tied down and secured. However, a vessel displaying the name *Aurora* on her bow and crewed by twenty or so sailors is preparing to depart.

"There's Utrirr's boat!" Thalgar says, waving you onward.

Utrirr, a weathered, hard-looking sailor with a thick beard, comes across as curt, communicating only in grunts. But he grants Thalgar and you passage with a simple shrug. It seems that Utrirr is willing to take any local who boards his boat without question.

Before long, *Aurora* casts off from the jetty, and a dozen oars dip into the water. The crew, all hardened-looking folk of Icewind Dale, expertly navigate the little fishing



craft out of the port and onto the lake. Looking back, you see the walls of Targos receding atop the cliffs.

A short while later, a stiff breeze catches the sails and the oars are shipped. Utrirr barks commands that you have difficulty understanding. Sometimes the words sound like Common. But at other times, you think it might be some sort of local dialect, or a special sailor's language.

Aurora plies its way northwest across Maer Dualdon. "Good fishing up this way," Thalgar remarks morosely, sitting huddled with you on a bench by the port side of the boat. "It's where Malgar was when he was kidnapped. Utrirr will put us ashore once we get there."

If you have the codeword TARDY, go to entry 58.

Otherwise, turn to entry 36.

16. SAFE AND SOUND

Without pausing to think about it, you hurl yourself out of the path of the falling mast, landing awkwardly but avoiding any serious damage. Quickly, you get up, pushing the section of the mast out of the way before returning to your oar, to several shouts of approval from the crew. You gain inspiration for this hearty effort!

Finally, *Aurora* rights herself and Utrirr regains control of the vessel, navigating into the calmer waters of a sheltered cove.

"Knucklehook Cove," Thalgar says, nodding toward the shore. "The Brukka village is just inland from here."

Go to entry 37.

17. WELL-TIMED ATTACK

You hear an enraged roar and the flapping of wings. Soaring down from its perch high in the cavern, the dragon flies straight toward the wide entrance. Watching Thalgar, you see him subtly lift a finger, as if to signal that you hold your attack. And then ...

“Now!” Thalgar yells, diving out of the way, and you unleash your attack just as the dragon flashes into view.

Make your ranged attack against AC 17, or consult the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the end of the adventure for the dragon’s statistics if you need him to make a saving throw.

If your attack hits or the dragon fails his save, go to entry 32.

If your attack misses or the dragon succeeds on his save, go to entry 41.

18. ICY ESCAPE

Thalgar gets clear just in time, throwing himself prone onto the ice beside the hole that has opened underneath him.

“Quick,” you say, going to his side with as light a tread as possible. “We have to get off this ice!”

The two of you move fast and low, keeping your weight as even as you can. Eventually, you feel the snow underfoot thicken, and the noise of the cracking ice subsides. The sun shines overhead, but you eye it with suspicion now. It seems the elements are conspiring against you!

Now proceed to entry 72.

19. COLD PURSUIT

With renewed vigor, you and Thalgar make your way quickly across the plain, determined to catch the party of warriors who are escorting Malgar to his death—a blood sacrifice to a white dragon.

Roll a d20 to determine which entry you go to next. If you have the codeword **HASTE**, add 4 to the roll. If you have the codeword **MOUNT**, add 8 to the roll. If you have both of these, add 12 to the roll.

1–8: Go to entry 52.

9–16: Go to entry 40.

17+: Go to entry 7.

20. KNOCKED DOWN

You move as quickly as you can, but even as you dive, the mast strikes your back, smashing you to the deck painfully and knocking the wind out of you. You take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Propping yourself against the side of the boat and catching your breath, you watch as a burly deckhand quickly takes your place. Digging the oar into the surging waves, she gives you a wink and a smile. Although you are in pain, you can’t help but laugh at her tenacity.

Eventually, you are able to get yourself back on the bench and pulling on the oar as best you can. The smiling crew member returns to her more urgent duties.

Finally, *Aurora* rights herself and Utrirr regains control of the vessel, navigating into the less turbulent waters of a sheltered cove.

“Knucklehook Cove,” Thalgar says, nodding toward the shore. “The Brukka village is just inland from here.”

Go to entry 37.

21. OCEAN AMBUSH

Aurora comes alongside the beleaguered fishing boat, heaving to. Watching the supposedly distressed figures in the vessel, you are surprised to see the figure previously huddled on the deck smoothly get to her feet, battleaxe in hand! Now that you are close, you see that these two tricksters have morphed into fish-like creatures. Malicious grins spread over their faces, as the axe fighter prepares to leap up onto *Aurora*’s rail and the other throws their head back and emits an ear-splitting screech! From the water around you, other figures suddenly appear, clambering up onto *Aurora*. But you and Thalgar are already leaping into the fishing boat, ready to take on the leaders of this monstrous crew!

Go to the “Deep Scion Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and do battle with these fishy fraudsters! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

22. REVEALED

Taking a step, your foot slips on a patch of ice that you had not seen! As you stop yourself from falling, your movement is just loud enough to be heard. Malgar turns and sees you, crying out in surprise despite himself! Fool!

“Ach!” Xakkrath spits. “What is this? Intruders in my lair? Deceivers! Usurpers! You shall taste the ice of my breath!” The dragon leaps into the air and swoops down toward you, the cavern resonating with the intake of his breath.

“Die, wyrm!” Thalgar roars, emerging from the shadows. He runs straight into the beast’s path, bringing his greataxe arcing up toward the dragon’s trajectory.

Malgar watches, mouth agape, as you and his brother enter combat with his sadistic captor!

Go to the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and end either this quest or your life! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

23. THALGAR WEAKENED

As soon as the fire is lit, you remove Thalgar’s wet clothes and set about trying to get the warrior warm. The sun comes out as you do, and you whisper a silent prayer of thanks.

Still, the ordeal takes a toll on poor Thalgar. For the rest of the quest, Thalgar has two levels of exhaustion (see appendix A of the *Player’s Handbook*). He has disadvantage on ability checks and his speed is halved.

As best as you can, you prepare yourselves to continue on.

Proceed to entry 72.

24. FINAL FIGHT

Your attack catches the dragon just as you intended, and you hear Thalgar bellow out a mighty battle cry! The wyrm roars in pain and immediately drops from the ledge, spreading his wings and swooping down into the cavern below.

Time to end this!

Go to the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and face off against this malevolent wyrm! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

25. JUMP TO IT

Busy as you are heaving on the oar, you don't hear the warning at first.

"Look out!" a deckhand yells, diving out of the way. You hear a cracking, splintering sound above you—and see a piece of the mast break off to quickly pivot down toward you! You must act quickly and dive out of the way.

Make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw.

If successful, go to entry 16.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 20.

26. WARMTH OF LIFE

In the shelter of a low ridge, you remove Thalgar's furs and jerkin, which are soaked through. Thankfully, the warrior prefers to go without armor, or he might have been beyond saving. But you must still act fast, as he is beginning to shake uncontrollably, and you know that succumbing to the cold is as dangerous as any beast you might encounter out here.

You succeed in getting his top layer off, doing what you can to help Thalgar stave off the cold and come back from the brink. Thankfully, the sun comes out, and you whisper a silent prayer of thanks. If you have the knucklehead oil, you can use the life-saving substance on Thalgar.

The warrior laughs weakly as you rub his torso and back to improve his circulation. "Some people pay big money for this sort of thing in Waterdeep, I'm told."

You chuckle to yourself, amazed at his ability to crack jokes even at death's door. "Shut up and help me get you covered."

If you have the llama wool undershirt, you can pull that over Thalgar's chest. Llama wool is an excellent insulator, and draws moisture away from the skin. Then you cover the warrior up with his furs again.

Have Thalgar make three DC 12 Constitution saving throws. If you have the oil or the llama wool undershirt, roll the saving throws as normal. If you have both the oil and the undershirt, Thalgar makes the saves with advantage.

If two or three saves are successful, go to entry 67.

Otherwise, go to entry 46.

27. FALLEN YETI

The two yetis lie dead, their bodies steaming in the cold air. Between ragged breaths, Thalgar urges you to flee quickly. "The smell of the kill will attract wolves. Many wolves. Let's go!"

That's definitely motivation to get moving, but perhaps you have other ideas?

If you wish to harvest the yeti pelts (which you know are worth around 100 gp each), go to entry 48.

If you begin moving south once more, turn to entry 72.

28. GLASSES ON

If you're not wearing them already, you quickly get the snow glasses out of your pack. Although the sleet stings your face, your eyes are spared.

Eventually the storm subsides, and you set off once more toward the south.

Continue to entry 72.

29. EASY CLIMB

To climb the mountain with a climber's kit, make three DC 10 Strength (Athletics) checks, with disadvantage if you have the codeword **WANDERED**. Every time you fail a check, you slip on the mountainside and must make a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw to determine how quickly you can grab hold of something and stop your fall. On a success, you take 2d6 bludgeoning damage. On a failure, you take 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

For Thalgar's climb, make a single DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. If he succeeds, he ascends the mountain without trouble. If he fails, he takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage.

Once you have completed the ability checks and any required saving throws, the cave mouth stands before you.

If you have not perished on the mountainside, turn to entry 10.

30. HAGGLING

To haggle and get a better price on the items you wish to purchase, make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, you can subtract 20 percent of the purchase price from each item. Alternatively, you can use the extra time to purchase a fourth item, but all items are at full price.

Thalgar waits patiently, but you can tell from the expression on his face that he is not happy. Finally, you gather your purchases and the two of you depart for the docks.

Take the codeword **TARDY**.

Go to entry 15.

31. TIMELY RESCUE

You raise your hand to the fishing boat, hailing those on board. The figure who was waving to you realizes he has been seen, and immediately crouches to wake up his friend who was huddled in the bottom of the boat.

As you come near, you yell out to the pair. "What happened to the others?"

"We were attacked by the Brukkla!" they yell back.

"They came out in longboats and murdered them." The fisher points to the bodies.

"Why were you spared?" a crew member yells to them.

"We had to hide under the boat," the fisher responds.

"Please hurry." He desperately indicates his partner. "My friend is at death's door. The cold has got into her bones!"

"Throw us a rope!" Thalgar yells, leaning over the gunwale.

Make a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

If successful, go to entry 59.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 21.

32. SUCCESSFUL FEINT

Your attack catches the dragon just as you intended. He shrieks in rage as he flies out beyond the ledge, having been drawn into your trap and missing his attempt to grasp Thalgar in his claws!

"Quick, get inside!" Thalgar yells, getting to his feet as the dragon wheels above the plain, preparing to return.

Knowing that if you stay on the ledge, you both risk taking the full brunt of the dragon's breath or being hurled off the cliff, it's hard to argue with that advice. The

two of you rush inside the cave, and prepare to face off against the malevolent wyrm!

Proceed to the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and end either this quest or your life! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

33. ON HORSEBACK

You get the horses ready quickly and quietly, then ride out of the village gate at a gentle canter, onto the plain.

Take the codeword **MOUNT**.

Turn to entry 65.

34. ICE BREAKER

The cracking, creaking noise of the ice underfoot alerts you to an unexpected predicament.

“Thalgar!” you yell to your companion, a little way ahead of you. “We’re standing on a lake!”

Thalgar’s eyes go wide and he looks down. Time seems to slow as you hear the ice beneath his feet give way. Desperately, Thalgar lurches sideways, trying to avoid falling into the frigid water.

Make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw for Thalgar (d20 + 3). If you are mounted, Thalgar automatically fails this saving throw.

If successful, go to entry 18.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 71.

35. DRAGON IN THE DARK

You peer up into the blackness but see nothing! The dragon is hidden somewhere up there, curse him. What to do now?

To create a diversion, go to entry 39.

To emerge from your location and confront the dragon, go to entry 73.

36. DISTRESS CALL

Suddenly a shout goes up from one of the crew. “To starboard!” she yells. Turning in that direction, you see a craft, much smaller than *Aurora*, adrift with its sails in tatters. Inside the boat, you see four fishers: two slumped dead over the bow, one huddled on the deck, and another standing and shouting, trying to get the attention of *Aurora*.

Utrirr turns to you and Thalgar. “Your call,” he says gruffly.

Thalgar, desperate as he is to save his brother, is still not without compassion. “What do you think?” he asks you.

You survey the boat once more. Will you go to their rescue?

If so, go to entry 51.

If you decide to continue on your course, go to entry 12.

37. WARRIORS’ WELCOME

You disembark upon the western shore of Maer Dualdon as dark-gray storm clouds roll in overhead, casting an ominous shadow over an already bleak landscape. The choppy waves of the lake break against the shore, pounding down and then draining through the stones with a hiss. In the distance, to the southwest, mountains line the horizon. Between you and them spreads a

barren, nearly featureless plain, with only a few boulders and some low hills and gullies to break up the icy expanse. Everything is white and frozen.

The only other visible feature lies about half a mile inland from the stony beach. You see a small settlement, protected from the winds by a well-constructed fence made of upright logs. You wonder where the villagers might have gotten those, but as your eye wanders north, you see a mountainside covered in pine. Forests can be found out here, after all. But they are few and far between.

Behind you, Utrirr orders his crew to prepare *Aurora* to relaunch back out into Maer Dualdon.

“That’s the Brukka village,” Thalgar says quietly, looking toward the settlement.

“What’s the best way to proceed here?” you ask. “Creep up on them?”

Thalgar shakes his head. “No point,” he replies. “You can rest assured they already know we’re here. They know all that goes on. And if you hadn’t noticed, there’s no cover. Nothing to conceal us if we wanted to sneak up on them.”

“So what’s the plan?”

Thalgar takes a breath, considering, then exhales. “The way I see it,” he says, “we have three options. Fighting is not one of them. We can either negotiate with the Brukka for Malgar’s release, trying to come up with some compromise. We can offer gold for Malgar, attempt to pay for my brother’s life.”

“And the third option?” you ask?

“Deception,” Thalgar replies. “We trick them some ...”

Thalgar pauses midsentence. You look toward the village and see that three figures are quickly approaching on horseback, clad in furs and heavily armed. It takes only a few moments for the skilled riders to cover the distance. They rear up before you, their leader coming to the fore, not bothering to dismount.

“Chief Ghudvil welcomes you, southerners, and invites you to join him in his longhouse.” His tone makes it sound less like an invitation than a demand, and your eyes pass over the other two tribesfolk who sit impassively astride their mounts, silently gazing into the middle distance.

Thalgar turns to you. “Looks like negotiations have begun,” he says.

Proceed to entry 11.

38. ARRIVAL

Working hard at your oar, heaving at the surging waves, you keep one eye on Utrirr and discern that he is a master sailor. Judging the rhythm and the subtle indications of the waves, he expertly maneuvers *Aurora* through the churning waters of the lake. Your case of nerves begins to subside, and it’s not long before the stony shore comes into sight. “Knucklehook Cove,” Thalgar says, nodding toward the shore. “The Brukka village is just inland from here.”

Go to entry 37.

39. DECEIVING THE DRAGON

You quickly confer with Thalgar, and devise a simple diversion to try and lure the dragon out. The plan is for Thalgar to stand just outside the entrance and taunt the



creature, while you wait beside the entrance and attack as he flies out.

Approaching the cave mouth, Thalgar yells into the darkness beyond. “Does the feeble lizard, the spawn of the pitiful Angnath, dwell in this miserable cave? If so, let the cowardly wyrm come forth and meet his maker!”

You crouch off to the side of the cave mouth, preparing an attack.

White dragons are not particularly intelligent. Have Thalgar make a DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check (d20 + 0). If you are a magic user and can use some sort of spell to enhance Thalgar’s already loud and booming voice, he makes the check with advantage.

If successful, go to entry 17.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 56.

40. WARMING UP

As the day wears on, the sun makes a welcome appearance, coming out from behind the clouds to cast its warming rays over your tired bodies.

Make a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check.

If successful, go to entry 34.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 3.

41. FAILED FEINT

The dragon avoids your attack, but still shrieks in rage as he flies out into the night and beyond the ledge, having missed grasping Thalgar in his claws.

“Quick, get inside!” Thalgar yells, getting to his feet as the dragon wheels above the plain, preparing to return.

Knowing that if you stay on the ledge, you both risk taking the full brunt of the dragon’s breath or being hurled off the cliff, it’s hard to argue with that advice. The two of you rush inside the cave, and prepare to face off against the malevolent wyrm!

Proceed to the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and end either this quest or your life! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

42. WRONG DESTINATION

You head toward the three-peaked mountain, determined to locate the dragon’s lair and rescue Malgar if he is still alive. But the light is fading quickly.

When you have almost reached the mountain, you hear a monstrous sound that seems to rend the air itself—coming from the other peak! It’s the roar of a dragon!

“This is the wrong mountain!” Thalgar cries in dismay. “Quickly, we must head east!”

Changing your course, you make for the other peak, cursing your judgment. You have lost valuable time in making the wrong choice, and night is fast approaching. The mountain will be that much harder to climb in the fading light.

Take the codeword **WANDERED**.

Proceed to entry 66.

43. SNOW BLIND

Sleet drives into your face as if some unseen tormentor is flaying you with an icy whip. You try to cover your face, but the damage has already been done. Finally, the storm subsides, and you slowly open your eyes. But you are in pain and your vision is blurred. For the remainder of the quest, you have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Now that the blizzard has abated, you catch sight of Thalgar once more. The two of you set out again toward the south.

Continue to entry 72.

44. HARD CLIMB

To climb the mountain without a climber's kit, make three DC 14 Strength (Athletics) checks, with disadvantage if you have the codeword **WANDERED**. Every time you fail a check, you slip on the mountainside and must make a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw to determine how quickly you can grab hold of something and stop your fall. On a success, you take 2d6 bludgeoning damage. On a failure, you take 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

For Thalgar's climb, make a single DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. If he succeeds, he ascends the mountain without trouble. If he fails, he takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage.

Once you have completed the ability checks and any required saving throws, the cave mouth stands before you.

If you have not perished on the mountainside, turn to entry 10.

45. NO AID

Despite watching for some time, you can see no indication that any of these warriors are likely to help you in your cause.

To wait until nightfall and then leave the Brukka village, turn to entry 69.

To stay the night (taking a long rest) and leave early the next morning, go to entry 14.

46. THALGAR EXHAUSTED

You have succeeded in bringing Thalgar back from the brink of death, but the ordeal takes a toll on the warrior. If Thalgar succeeded on one saving throw, he has one level of exhaustion (see appendix A of the *Player's Handbook*), giving him disadvantage on ability checks. If he failed all three saves, he has two levels of exhaustion, giving him disadvantage on ability checks and halving his speed. This exhaustion lasts for the rest of the quest.

As best as you can, you prepare yourselves to continue on.

Proceed to entry 72.

47. RUSHED ESCAPE

"Faster," Thalgar urges. The two of you stride as quickly as you can across the inhospitable tundra, legs aching. You cover a good amount of ground, even though the thick snow is tough going without snowshoes. Clouds of white puff into the air as you push your body to its limits.

You hear another roar, which seems farther away.

"We might be lucky," Thalgar says, glancing toward the mountains. "Perhaps it couldn't track our scent."

A while later, you slacken your pace a little, convinced that you are out of danger. Resting for a short time, you stare out toward the east, where glacial valleys formed over eons snake down to the plain like great ice serpents.

Proceed to entry 72.

48. FUR TRADER

Make two DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) checks. For each successful check, you claim one yeti pelt (worth 100 gp). These can be sold in any settlement in Icewind Dale.

Proceed to entry 72.

49. FIRE STARTER

With no supplies at hand to stave off the cold, Thalgar quickly goes downhill. Do you have anything made of wood in your inventory (such as a quarterstaff) and a tinderbox? If so, make a DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check to see if you can light a fire on this frozen tundra.

If successful, go to entry 23.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 64.

50. ON THE RUN

You and Thalgar are soon out on the plain, breaking into a jog to keep the cold at bay.

"We'll make good time out of the wind," you say, trying to buoy Thalgar's spirits.

He nods, fixing you with a hard gaze. "Let's go get my brother," he says.

"That's the spirit!" Then the two of you put your heads down and surge forth across the frozen plain.

Go to entry 65.

51. TO THE RESCUE

At your direction, Utrirr turns the boat to starboard, making for the fishing vessel. The boom swings rapidly across the deck, those crew in its way effortlessly ducking out of its path.

You are soon nearing the fishing boat, and can hear the voice of the figure who was hailing you. "Help! We've been attacked! They're still around here somewhere!"

A crew member standing near you frowns in confusion. "Thrayn?" she mutters.

To ask the crew member what the matter is, go to entry 5.

To hail the beleaguered craft, go to entry 31.

52. FOREBODING TRACKS

Thalgar stops dead, staring down at something. You come to his side to see what has caught his attention: tracks. Huge footprints in the snow, at least three times the size of a human's.

"Another yeti," Thalgar murmurs. "It might be tracking us ... we should—"

His words are interrupted by a loud, bellowing roar, coming from the mountain valleys about a half mile to your east.

"It has its lair over there," Thalgar says. "Quickly. We should get moving before it catches our scent!"

Make a DC 18 Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Survival) check. If you possess snowshoes, make the check with

advantage. If you are mounted, make the check with disadvantage.

If successful, go to entry 47.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 74.

53. GETTING UNDERWAY

As you and Thalgar finish your fight, the crew of *Aurora* drive off the last of their own attackers. If you were pulled into the water by the deep scions, the sailors on *Aurora* quickly help you get warm and dry. A quick search of the fishing boat and the bodies of the strange creatures turns up fishing tackle and a light crossbow, but nothing else of interest.

"Toss all the bodies over," Utrirr yells. "And get back to your oars, you useless dogs!"

The crew quickly obey, and you soon see the reason for Utrirr's urgency. Thick gray clouds dominate the eastern sky, rolling over the town of Lonelywood on the far shore and quickly advancing across Maer Dualdon toward you.

Turning *Aurora* to port, Utrirr begins sailing for the western shore of Maer Dualdon, the crew rowing furiously to aid the ship's progress. You fancy you can see smoke plumes rising from the distant shore.

"The Village of the Brukka tribe," Thalgar mutters. "That's where Malgar is." He looks at you, brow furrowed with worry. "I hope."

Utrirr mutters darkly, eying the approaching storm front. "Shelter," he mumbles thickly. "Western cove."

"Should we be worried?" you ask Thalgar.

The warrior shakes his head. "We'll beat it to shore. Utrirr will drop us near the Brukka village. Then he'll shelter in Knucklehook Cove and wait the storm out."

Turn to entry 70.

54. SEEKING ALLIES

You settle down with Thalgar along the wall of the longhouse to talk. Several pairs of eyes watch you, but you keep your voices low. Eventually, even these loyal Brukka warriors lose interest.

"If we could find an ally among them," you whisper, "it might help us track the warrior party on the plains."

Thalgar nods, breathing heavily to help keep his anger at bay. "Yes," he says, "an ally. But who?"

"Patience," you say. "And keep your eyes open."

As casually as possible, you watch the interactions between Chief Ghudvil and his inner circle of warriors as you pretend to bed down for the night. Make a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Insight) check.

If successful, go to entry 4.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 45.

55. PERFECT SHOT

There, in the upper vault of the cavern! Perched on a high ledge, about a hundred feet away, a white dragon surveys the floor below, the front half of his body exposed and his long neck craning downward. You could definitely target the creature at this angle!

Make your ranged attack against AC 17, or consult the "Xakkrath Combat Sheet" section at the end of the adventure for the dragon's statistics if you need him to make a saving throw.

If your attack hits or the dragon fails his save, go to entry 24.

If your attack misses or the dragon succeeds on his save, go to entry 62.

56. DISMISSIVE DRAGON

"Fool!" the dragon cackles. "You'll not lure me out there with your goading words! I think it is on you to prove your bravery—or your lack of it! Pitiful ... miserable ... cowardly. Let's see who such qualities truly belong to, shall we, little imp?"

The only option left to you now is to stride in and confront this evil wyrm!

Turn to entry 73.

57. RESTLESS HORSES

The horses softly stamp their feet as you attempt to prepare them for riding. Either you or Thalgar must make a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

If successful, go to entry 33.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 2.

58. STORM WARNING

Utrirr grimaces, nodding toward the east. "Storm front," he grunts, in what are possibly the first intelligible words you've heard from him. "We could have beat it if we'd departed a bit earlier."

Thalgar looks at you darkly. "Hear that?" he says.

The clouds are thick, slate gray, and rolling in fast. On the far eastern shore, you see the storm pass over the town of Lonelywood, an ominous wave of shadow that rolls across the lake. The ship's sail begins flapping in the stiff breeze, and soon Utrirr is shouting orders, directing his crew to secure anything not already tied down.

"This will be rough," Thalgar warns. "Be prepared to work."

Sure enough, moments later Utrirr directs you and Thalgar to work the oars as the rest of the crew busy themselves with other jobs. The swell is now a meter high, and growing fast.

"Hard to port!" Utrirr yells as he turns the boat toward the western shore of Maer Dualdon. The waves are now behind the boat and speeding it toward your destination, but the going is hard. You pull at the oar for all you're worth.

Roll a d20.

If the roll is 1–7, go to entry 25.

If the roll is 8–15, go to entry 61.

If the roll is 16–20, go to entry 38.

59. SOMETHING FISHY

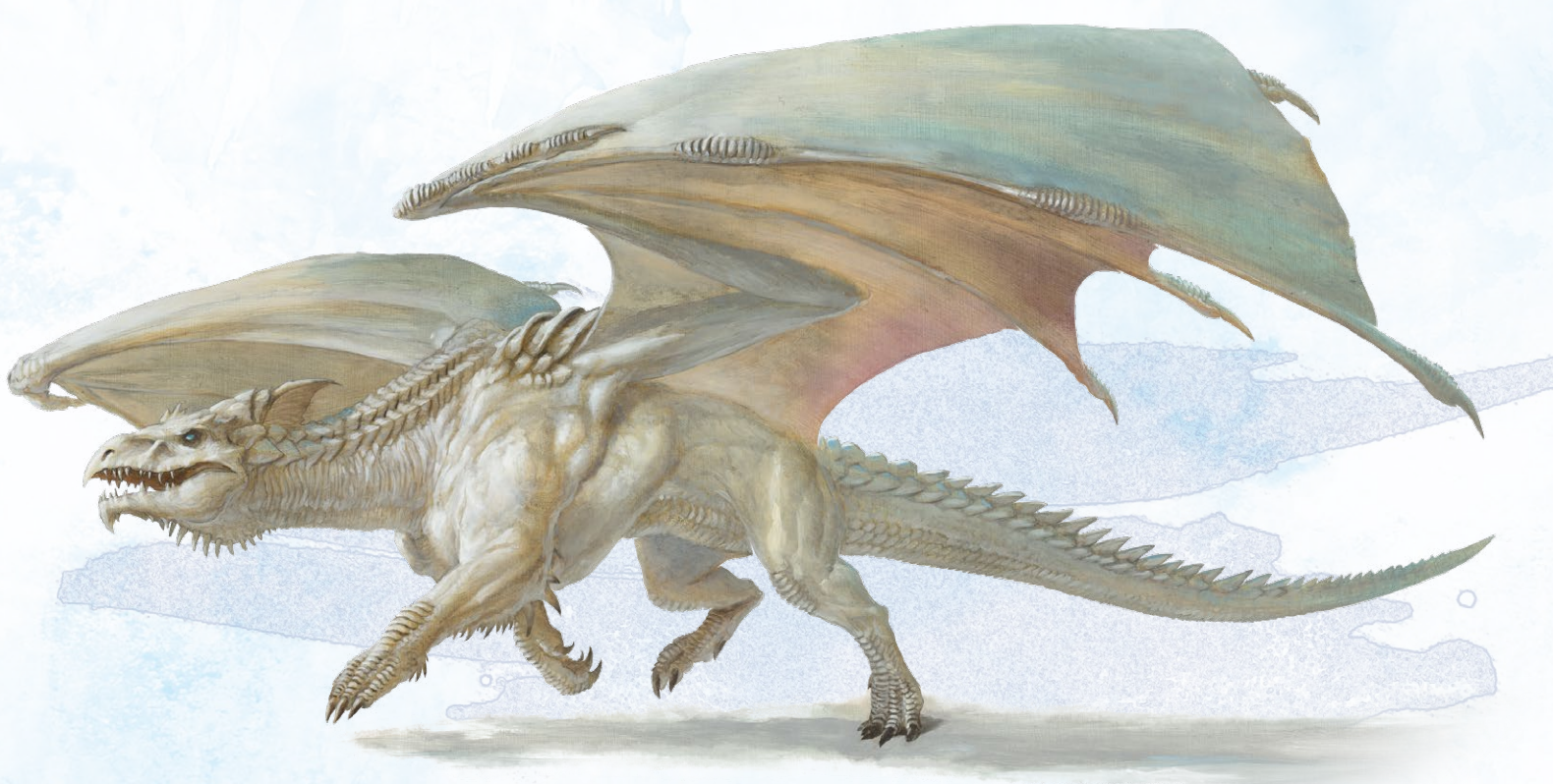
Something about these fishers seems off to you. The way the dead bodies are positioned over the side, the way one of them huddles in the bottom of the boat while the other signals to you—it all seems wrong. You give Thalgar a nudge as *Aurora* pulls up beside the beleaguered craft.

"What is it?" Thalgar asks.

"Something's going on here," you say. "Be ready."

The warrior's eyes go wide, and he gives you a pointed nod. Take the codeword **WARNED**.

Aurora comes alongside the beleaguered fishing boat, heaving to. Watching the supposedly distressed figures in the boat, you are not surprised to see the figure previously huddled on the deck smoothly get to her feet, battleaxe in hand! Now that you are close, you



see that these two tricksters have morphed into fish-like creatures. Malicious grins spread over their faces, as the axe fighter prepares to leap up onto *Aurora's* rail and the other throws their head back and emits an ear-splitting screech! From the water around you, other figures suddenly appear, clambering up onto *Aurora*. But you and Thalgar are already leaping into the fishing boat, ready to take on the leaders of this monstrous crew!

Go to the “Deep Scion Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and do battle with these fishy fraudsters! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

60. ENTERING THE CAVERN

With slow, measured steps, barely daring to breathe, you enter the cavern, using the nooks and crannies in the rock walls to conceal your presence. Large patches of ice spread across the floor (perhaps from the dragon's breath?), and you take care to avoid these so as not to slip and give away your position. Malgar is nearby, but he hasn't seen you yet, so quiet has your entrance been. With the slightest of movements, you turn your head, trying to locate the dragon. But the upper reaches of the cavern, from where the dragon's voice seems to originate, are dark, and feature many ledges and outcroppings where the creature might be hiding.

Make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. If you have darkvision, you make the check with advantage. If you were left snow blind from the blizzard earlier, you make the check with disadvantage.

If successful, go to entry 55.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 35.

61. ROGUE WAVE

Focused on your job working the oars, you don't notice it at first. But then a shout goes up: “Rogue wave!” A solid wall of water is bearing down on *Aurora*!

Utrirr growls, immediately turning the craft into the oncoming swell. However, his reaction comes too late, and the wave catches the ship on a diagonal. *Aurora* lurches dangerously to the side and multiple crew members go flying, yourself included. Make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

If successful, you manage to twist in such a way that you avoid the worst of the fall. Take 1d6 bludgeoning damage. If you fail, heads collide and a handful of crew land together awkwardly, with several people sustaining minor injuries. Take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Finally, *Aurora* rights herself and Utrirr regains control of the vessel, navigating into the less turbulent waters of a sheltered cove.

“Knucklehook Cove,” Thalgar says, nodding toward the shore. “The Brukka village is just inland from here.”

Go to entry 37.

62. DRAGON DEFIANT

Your attack goes wide of the dragon, who cackles mockingly. “You'll have to do better than that, imp!” he chides. “Let us see how well you fare against the dread Xakkrath!”

“You have not earned such a title yet, little lizard!” Thalgar bellows, stepping out from the shadows and drawing his greataxe. “Come meet your doom!”

Letting out an enraged roar that echoes around the cavernous chamber, the dragon drops from the ledge, spreading his wings and swooping into the cavern below! Time to end this!

Go to the “Xakkrath Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and face off against this malevolent wyrm! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

63. MESSAGE FOR THE CAPTAIN

You approach Utrirr, leaving your post at the oars. Seeing you, the hardened captain bellows in rage. "Get back to your oar, lubber!" You shake your head, holding his gaze as you step close and relate what you've just heard from the crew member. But the captain is fuming, and not ready to listen to a disobedient passenger!

Make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

If successful, go to entry 9.

If unsuccessful, go to entry 68.

64. THALGAR HOLDS ON

Although you cannot get the fire lit, Thalgar is made of hardy stuff, as are most folk of the north. It seems clear that the thought of succumbing to the cold before rescuing his brother is too much for the warrior to bear. Through sheer force of will, he gets himself warm. Shaking uncontrollably, he takes a few bites of food and rubs his arms and chest.

You're concerned for him. He doesn't appear fully recovered, and some of his speech is slurred. But there is little else you can do but carry on.

For the rest of the quest, Thalgar has three levels of exhaustion (see appendix A of the *Player's Handbook*). He has disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls and saving throws, and his speed is halved.

As best as you can, you prepare yourselves to continue on.

Proceed to entry 72.

65. SIGNS OF STRUGGLE

By the time the sun climbs into the sky, you have already covered many miles, and fatigue and the cold are beginning to set in. Still, you are in awe of the frozen beauty of this inhospitable landscape. To your east, between you and the lake of Maer Dualdon, a mountain range rises from the plain. As the sun heats the snow on the precipitous slopes, you hear the cracking of ice echoing across the landscape. At midmorning, a distant rumble reaches you from the east. Turning that way once more, you see thick, opaque clouds of snow billowing down a mountain valley.

"Avalanche," Thalgar remarks. Slowly, the noise subsides.

Few words are exchanged between you and the warrior as you trudge southward, searching for signs of the Brukka party who were taking Malgar to be sacrificed to the dragon Angnath.

At about midday, you stumble across your first indication that you are on the right path. Ahead, you see three wolves feeding on some unknown creature lying dead on the snow. Thalgar shoos them away and you move closer to inspect the corpse. It is a Brukka warrior, their body rent by claws, the gashes too long and deep to have been inflicted by any wolf.

"Yeti," Thalgar says, immediately looking up and scanning the surrounding landscape. You do the same.

"Look," you say, pointing to a blood trail.

Following this a little way to the east, you find the body of a huge yeti, twelve feet tall at least, its arm hewn off and a deep wound at the base of its neck. "They managed to slay the thing," you say grimly.

"But not without taking wounds themselves." Thalgar points to more blood on the snow, leading south. "That will slow them down!"

With renewed enthusiasm, the warrior jumps up and immediately sets off, following the blood trail. Sighing and shaking your head, you go after him, dreaming of a warm inn and a glass of mulled wine.

Proceed to entry 19.

66. WHITETOOTH PEAK

With the light fading, you make your way quickly toward the fang-shaped mountain. Surely this is the one that holds the lair of the dreaded Angnath, molded as it is like a white fang piercing the wintry sky. Thundery clouds soar overhead, and a stiff wind picks up as you near the ominous peak.

As you get closer, you see a waterfall that should pour from the lower part of the mountain, frozen as if suspended in time. Now the wind is really picking up, and you can see that climbing this frosty slope will take all your determination and strength.

"Look!" Thalgar shouts above the wind. "There, about halfway up!" You look to where Thalgar is pointing and see a yawning cave mouth. "That's the lair, surely!"

You agree that if a dragon were to lair anywhere in this frozen domain, that would be the place.

Surveying the steep slope, you realize it is going to be a challenge to reach that cave mouth, especially with night fast approaching.

Do you possess a climber's kit?

If yes, go to entry 29.

If not, go to entry 44.

67. RECOVERED WARRIOR

Your efforts have paid off. Thalgar has warmed up and is soon smiling and thanking you for your quick action. The two of you have a bite to eat, which Thalgar insists is essential. "Food helps you keep warm, especially out here," he says, insisting that you take some of his rations.

Crisis averted, the two of you pack up and set out south once more.

Proceed to entry 72.

68. READY AND WAITING

"Silence!" Utrirr roars. "And back to your oar, lubber! You dare desert your post?" The captain is in a rage, and you can see it's hopeless trying to reason with him.

Fearing some undead trickery, or worse, you coldly turn back toward the fishing boat, giving Thalgar a sly nod. The warrior's eyes go narrow with recognition, and you see his hand slowly go to the hilt of his greataxe.

Take the codeword **WARNED**.

Aurora comes alongside the beleaguered craft, heaving to. Watching the supposedly distressed figures in the boat, you are not surprised to see the figure previously huddled on the deck smoothly get to her feet, battleaxe in hand! Now that you are close, you see that these two tricksters have morphed into fish-like creatures. Malicious grins spread over their faces, as the axe fighter prepares to leap up onto *Aurora*'s rail and the other throws their head back and emits an ear-splitting screech! From the water around you, other figures suddenly appear, clambering up onto *Aurora*. But you and

Thalgar are already leaping into the fishing boat, ready to take on the leaders of this monstrous crew!

Go to the “Deep Scion Combat Sheet” section at the back of the adventure and do battle with these fishy fraudsters! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

69. LATE-NIGHT DEPARTURE

Gradually the Brukka village quiets down as the tribesfolk all head to their respective sleeping places. A bone-white moon hangs in the sky outside, visible through a small window. Every once in a while, you turn your head to track its slow progress, and each time you do so, the village has become quieter. The fire pit keeps the longhouse warm, and it seems that many of Ghudvil's warriors sleep here.

As soon as things have quieted down, you tap Thalgar on the shoulder. “Let’s go,” you whisper, and the two of you are quickly up and out the door. You do not need to rest, and the night provides valuable time that you could use to catch up with the Brukka party somewhere out on the plain.

Take the codeword **HASTE**.

As you move through the sleeping village, two horses whinny a soft greeting from a stable where they are housed, along the main avenue of the settlement.

To attempt to steal these horses, go to entry 57.

Otherwise, go to entry 50.

70. ARRIVAL

It isn't long before *Aurora*, under Utrirr's expert guidance, enters the more sheltered waters of Knucklehook Cove.

Go to entry 37.

71. GOING UNDER

Thalgar tries to get himself clear, but it happens too fast. The ice gives way beneath him and he plunges into the frigid water below.

Keeping your tread as light as possible, you rush to the hole where Thalgar fell. He's clinging on to the edge of the ice but is already shaking, his teeth chattering loudly. You will need to get him out of the numbingly cold water quickly, then get him warm if he is to survive.

The first task is achieved fairly easily. You haul Thalgar out of the water and the two of you carefully make your way off the ice sheet to the relative safety of the snow. Then you quickly get to work.

Do you possess knucklehead oil or a llama wool undershirt?

If you possess either or both of these items, go to entry 26.

If you possess neither, go to entry 49.

72. ICY AMBUSH

As the afternoon wears on, the snow falls ever faster. If you are riding horses, you are forced to abandon them here and continue on foot. It's hard even for Thalgar, with his muscular legs, to get through. Islands of high rock cliffs loom around you as you press farther south, toward two mountains that now dominate the skyline.

Thalgar calls a halt to take a little food and to rest a while. You can both take a short rest. To the south, a lone





thunderhead shaped like a castle slowly moves toward you, passing between the two peaks.

"One of those mountains is surely the dragon's lair," Thalgar says darkly. "But which?"

You study the two peaks closely. The one to the right appears to be a cluster of three smaller peaks, almost like a trident. The left-hand mountain is slightly curved, like the elongated fang of a gargantuan beast.

Not wanting to linger too long, you get going again across the merciless landscape toward the two mountains.

Thalgar points out some odd-shaped mounds of ice ahead. "Strange formations," he remarks as you continue toward them.

Rounding a large rock formation, you cry out in alarm! Before you, a huge insect-like creature rears up, its long, sectioned body flanked by small wings, and its large, glossy black eyes regarding you greedily. This is no dragon, but a creature known as a remorhaz! You quickly prepare for battle!

Turn to entry 8.

73. FACING THE DRAGON

Thalgar grasps you by the shoulder, and a grim smile spreads across his weathered face. "You've come all this way with me, friend. Let's finish this!"

"For death and glory," you affirm, reaching up and grabbing his arm.

Preparing yourselves for battle, you stride boldly into the dragon's lair.

"Present yourself, foul lizard!" Thalgar roars. "Come meet a deserved death under the steely glint of my greataxe!"

"Ach!" Xakkrath spits. "What is this? Intruders in my lair? Deceivers! Usurpers! You shall taste the ice of my breath!" The dragon leaps into the air and swoops down toward you, the cavern resonating with the intake of his breath.

"Die, wyrm!" Thalgar roars, emerging from the shadows. He runs straight into the beast's path, bringing his greataxe arcing up toward the dragon's trajectory.

Malgar watches, mouth agape, as you and his brother enter combat with his sadistic captor!

Go to the "Xakkrath Combat Sheet" section at the back of the adventure and end either this quest or your life! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

74. YETI ATTACK

Try as you might to move quickly through the thick snow, the wind is not in your favor. The roar comes again, and soon you see the great beast lumbering toward you. Wait ... there's two of them!

"Prepare yourself for a dread battle, friend," Thalgar growls, drawing his greataxe. Then he adds a last piece of advice: "They're afraid of fire."

Battle with these great ice creatures is imminent!

Go to the "Yeti Combat Sheet" section at the back of the adventure and defend yourself against this abominable threat! The outcome of that combat tells you which entry to go to next.

75. VICTORY?

The dragon's corpse lies wrecked on the floor of the cavern.

If Thalgar was killed in the combat, go to entry 6.

If Thalgar is still alive, go to entry 76.

76. MALGAR SAVED

Thalgar is on his knees after the pitched battle, and his brother Malgar goes to his side and grabs him in a tight embrace.

"You rescued me, big brother," he says hoarsely. "How can I ever repay you?"

Thalgar lets out an exhausted laugh. "Free knucklehead trout from your catch. For the rest of my life."

"Done," Malgar says, wiping away a tear.

You leave the brothers for a moment and explore the rest of the cave. In the far corner of the dragon's lair, you find something incredible. Beneath a thick sheet of ice, as if encased in glass, is a hoard of sorts. It makes sense that a white dragon would store treasure this way.

While you begin chipping away at the ice, Thalgar and Malgar get a fire started, collecting flammable material from around the cave: old clubs, a wagon wheel, discarded clothes, and other detritus. While they do, you work at uncovering the hoard. This task makes you sweat, but as the temperature within the lair rises, the ice begins to melt, making your job easier.

Finally, you reach the treasure, and can claim the following: 785 cp, 420 sp, 2,088 gp, 105 pp, eleven 100 gp gems, a *potion of stone giant strength*, and a *necklace of fireballs*.

(You can take this hoard if you wish, or you can roll for your own custom hoard on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 5–10 table in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you decide to roll for your own hoard, you must accept the result of your rolls and take that hoard).

It takes two days to return to Targos, giving the Brukka village a wide berth. Perhaps they will speak with Thalgar later to thank him for slaying the dragon. In the meantime, you are all eager for the comforts of civilization. Thalgar offers you the promised 500 gold, and asks you to join him for a drink to bid you well on your travels.

"I will forever be in debt to you, my friend," the warrior says as you sit in the Wolf's Pelt, supping tankards of hot mulled wine. "And any time you want a companion on your adventures ..."

You take a long drink of wine and place the tankard back on the dark wooden table. Turning to Thalgar, a broad grin spreads over your face.

"Well, as it happens, I've just overheard something ..."

Experience. If your Dungeon Master sent you on this quest, talk to them about whether they want to award you experience for this solo adventure or have you advance a level. In lieu of a DM decision, you can grant your character 5,000 XP (or divide that same amount among multiple characters). If you are feeling generous, you can instead decide to have each character advance one level.

Congratulations on successfully completing *Frozen Offerings*. Your adventure ends here!

THALGAR

To run Thalgar as a sidekick, use the following stat block.

THALGAR

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 15 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 68 (8d12 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5

Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +4, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 1

Two-Handed Axe Fighting. When Thalgar rolls a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack he makes with his greataxe wielded with two hands, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or 2.

Unarmored Defense. While Thalgar isn't wearing any armor, his Armor Class equals 10 + his Dexterity modifier + his Constitution modifier.

Rage (1/day). As a bonus action on his turn, Thalgar can enter a rage that lasts until the end of combat. While in a rage, he has a +2 bonus to damage with melee attacks, and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Reckless Attack. When Thalgar makes the first attack on his turn, he can choose to do so recklessly. Doing so grants him advantage on all melee attack rolls during that turn, but all attack rolls against him have advantage until the start of his next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Thalgar makes two attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Thrown Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage. Thalgar has six handaxes.

DEEP SCION COMBAT SHEET

Use the following notes when running the deep scion combat encounter:

- Use the Maer Dualdon battle map. The map is 25 × 25 squares.
- This fight takes place on the smaller fishing boat, with you and Thalgar taking on the deep scion leaders while the crew of *Aurora* take care of the other threats.
- Place your token and Thalgar's on the boat, along with two deep scions.
- Roll for initiative.
- You are surprised in the first round unless you have the codeword WARNED. If you have the codeword PREPARED, the scions are surprised in the first round.
- In round 1, one scion uses its Psychic Screech. The other scion moves into melee and uses Multiattack in its hybrid form.
- In round 2, the scion that used Psychic Screech in the last round enters melee and attacks in its hybrid form using Multiattack, while the other scion uses its Psychic Screech. Each scion has only one use of Psychic Screech.
- On the scions' subsequent turns, roll a d6 for each scion. On a 1–4, the scion uses Multiattack. On a 5–6, they attempt to drag a character or Thalgar over the side of the boat and into the water with a contested Strength (Athletics) check. If the first scion gets a 5–6, the second does not roll, but uses Multiattack regardless of who won the contested check.
- If a character or Thalgar is in the water, they can either attack the scion who just dragged them in (making attack rolls with disadvantage), or they can use their action to get back into the boat with a successful DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, they remain in the water. Any attacks on a character or Thalgar who is in the water are made with advantage unless the character has a swim speed (Thalgar does not).

If you defeat the scions, go to entry 53.

DEEP SCION

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., walk 20 ft. (in hybrid form), swim 40 ft. (in hybrid form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +4

Skills Deception +6, Insight +3, Sleight of Hand +3, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Aquan, Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The deep scion can use its action to polymorph into a humanoid-piscine hybrid form, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its speed, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. The deep scion reverts to its true form if it dies.

Amphibious (Hybrid Form Only). The deep scion can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. In humanoid form, the deep scion makes two melee attacks. In hybrid form, the deep scion makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Battleaxe (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee Weapon*

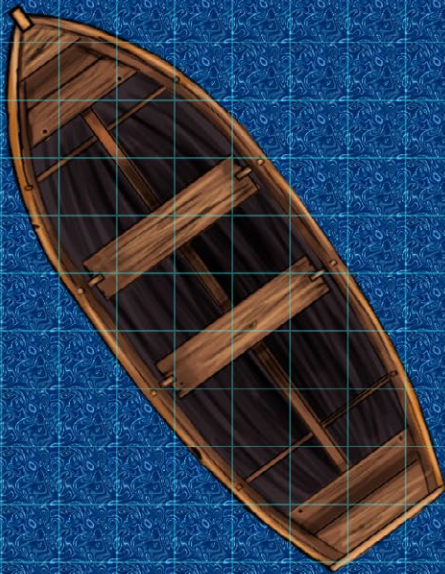
Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Bite (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Psychic Screech (Hybrid Form Only; Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The deep scion emits a terrible scream audible within 300 feet. Creatures within 30 feet of the deep scion must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of the deep scion's next turn.

MAER DUALDON BATTLE MAP



YETI COMBAT SHEET

Use the following notes when running the yeti combat encounter:

- Use the Yeti Encounter battle map. The map is 25 × 25 squares.
- Place your token and Thalgar's token anywhere near the bottom of the battle map, then roll a d20. Place one yeti that many squares away, then roll again for the second yeti.
- Roll for initiative.
- Unless you are wearing snowshoes, the encounter area is difficult terrain for you, but not for the yeti.
- Whenever you need to determine which character a yeti is targeting, roll a d4. On a 1–2, your character is targeted. On a 3–4, Thalgar is targeted. (If you are playing multiple characters, repeat the same process for them.)
- Whenever a yeti takes a turn, roll a d4. If the roll is 1–2, the yeti shoves the nearest character, making a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the target's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If the yeti wins the contest, it knocks the target prone. If the roll is 3–4, the yeti uses Multiattack. It focuses its claw attacks on paralyzed or prone targets, and does not bother using its Chilling Gaze if all potential targets are immune.
- Note the creature's Fear of Fire trait, which can be a huge boon to characters who can deal fire damage to a yeti.

If you defeat the yetis, go to entry 27.

YETI

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)	7 (–2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Yeti

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fear of Fire. If the yeti takes fire damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.

Keen Smell. The yeti has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Snow Camouflage. The yeti has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy terrain.

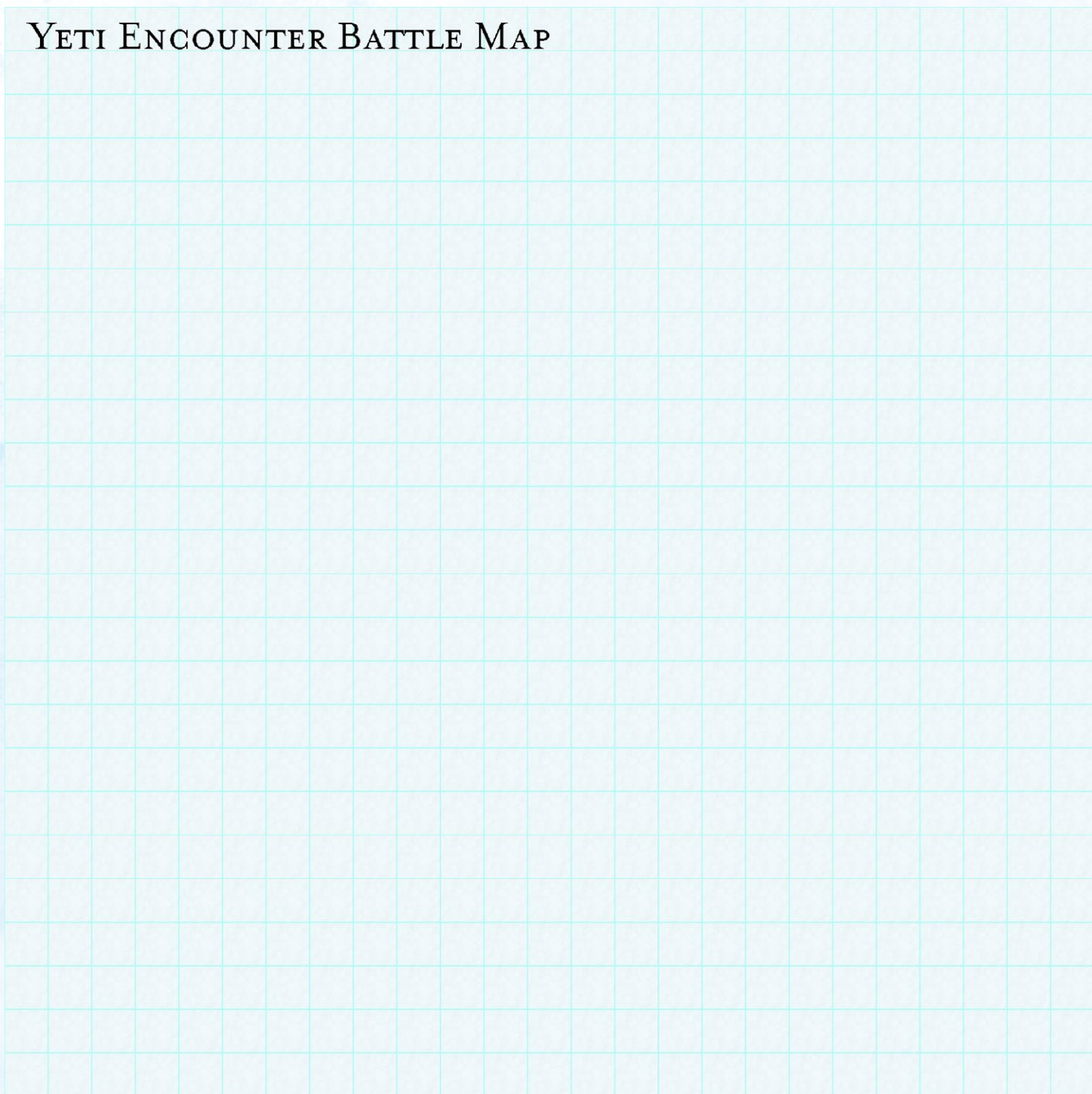
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The yeti can use its Chilling Gaze and makes two claw attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Chilling Gaze. The yeti targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the yeti, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against this magic or take 10 (3d6) cold damage and then be paralyzed for 1 minute, unless it is immune to cold damage. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends on it, the target is immune to the Chilling Gaze of all yetis (but not abominable yetis) for 1 hour.

YETI ENCOUNTER BATTLE MAP



XAKKRATH COMBAT SHEET

Use the following notes when running the white dragon combat encounter:

- Use the Dragon's Lair battle map. The map is 25 × 25 squares.
- Place your token and Thalgar's token near the cavern entrance. Roll a d10, and place Xakkrath's token on the map that many squares away, either within the cavern or behind the characters in the entrance, as appropriate. Remember that the dragon is a large creature, requiring a token that is two squares on each side.
- Roll for initiative.
- "Recharge 5–6" on Xakkrath's Cold Breath means the dragon can use that action once, after which it has a random chance of recharging each round. At the start of each of Xakkrath's turns, roll a d6. On a 5–6, Xakkrath's Cold Breath recharges and he can use it again that turn.
- Xakkrath uses his Cold Breath in the first round, then flies past the characters. He stays in the air until the start of his next turn, so that he can be targeted only by ranged attacks while he waits to see if Cold Breath recharges. If that attack does not recharge, the dragon lands adjacent to the nearest character (or randomly determine which character he targets) and uses Multiattack on that foe.
- If Xakkrath successfully recharges his Cold Breath, rather than instantly using it, he instead uses an action to disengage, then flies away 20 feet. On his following turn, he flies back toward the characters, encompassing as many characters (including Thalgar) as he can with that attack.
- The boulders on the map provide half cover (+2 AC). If a character is within 5 feet of a boulder that is between the character and Xakkrath, the DC for the Constitution save against the dragon's Cold Breath is reduced to 13.
- Numerous ice patches dot the map, marked in blue. These areas are difficult terrain for you and Thalgar, but not for Xakkrath with his Ice Walk trait. Alternatively, you can choose to move across areas of ice at normal speed, but you must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity check for each 5 feet of movement. If you fail a check, you fall prone.

If you are victorious, go to entry 75.

YOUNG WHITE DRAGON

Large dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (–2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +7, Wis +3, Cha +4

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Ice Walk. The dragon can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost it extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

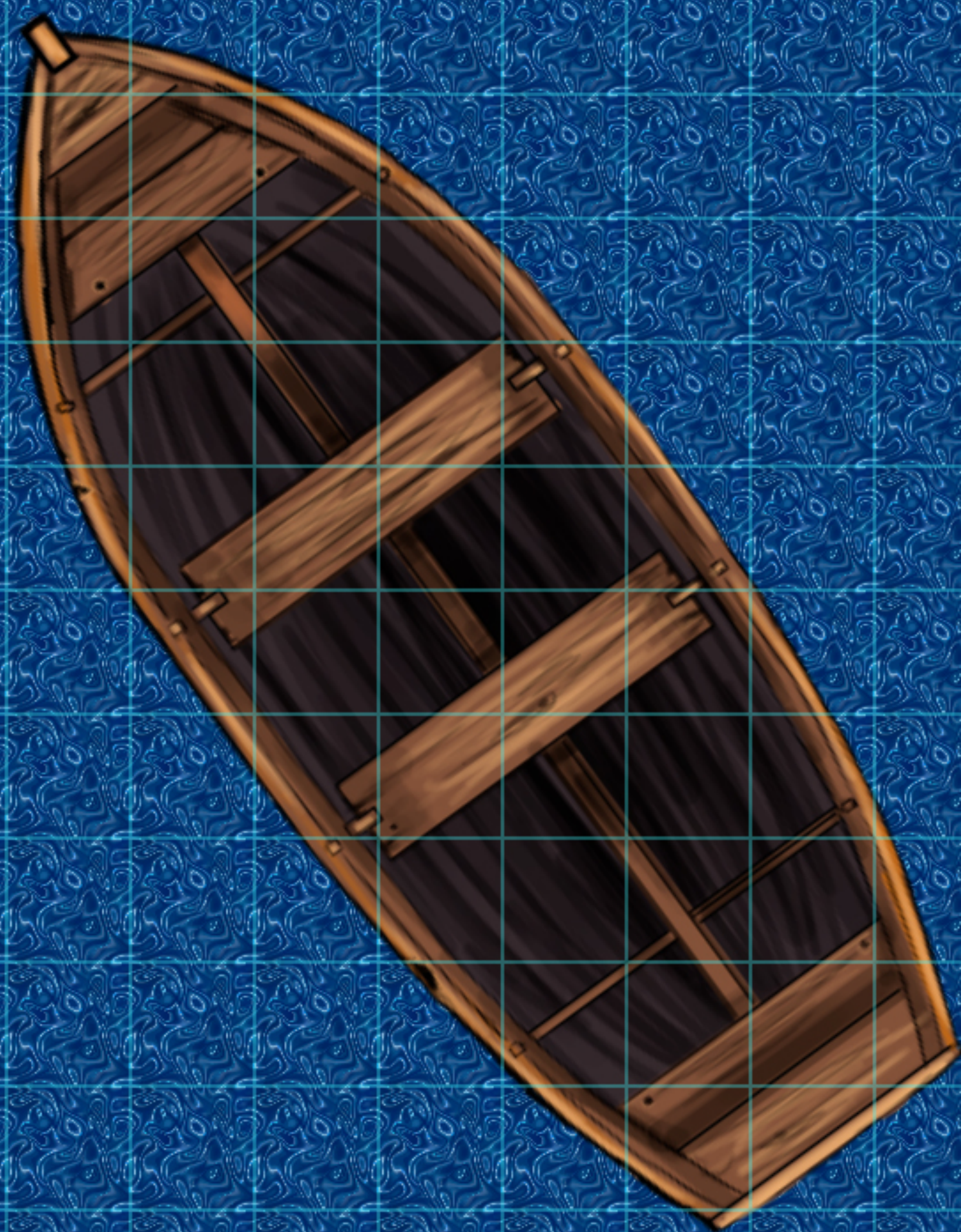
DRAGON'S LAIR BATTLE MAP



DRAGON'S LAIR BATTLE MAP



MAER DUALDON BATTLE MAP



YETI ENCOUNTER BATTLE MAP





Sage Advice Compendium

The latest update to the fifth edition rules includes forty-seven new additions answering players' queries.

The *Sage Advice Compendium* is the official D&D rules FAQ, providing answers to some of the most frequent questions for Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition. The recently released update includes new material for *Curse of Strahd*, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, *Storm King's Thunder*, *Tomb of Annihilation*, and *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, with its latest additions covering everything from character creation and combat to magic items and monsters.

The newest material is preceded by the tag “[NEW]” in the *Sage Advice Compendium* PDF and the latest updates include:

Racial Traits

Clarifying a shifter's temporary hit points and the rules on magical

darkness.

Class Features

Including updates for the artificer, bard, cleric, fighter, paladin, ranger, rogue, and wizard.

Adventuring

Further explaining the frightened condition and rules on short rests.

Combat

Answering queries on the use of natural weapons and two-weapon fighting.

Spellcasting

Updating the rules for spells requiring concentration, as well as the specific spells *animate dead*, *animate objects*, *compelled duel*, *counterspell*, *homunculus*, *find familiar*, *guardian of faith*, *misty step*, *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, *polymorph*, *shadow blade*, *slow*, *telekinesis*, and *tether essence*.

Monsters

Clarifying the grapple capabilities of burrowing creatures.

Magic Items

Explaining the use of the *ring of the ram*, *rope of entanglement*, *sphere of annihilation*, *magical shields*, and *dwarven thrower*.

DOWNLOAD THE SAGE ADVICE COMPENDIUM PDF



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SAGE ADVICE COMPENDIUM

The *Sage Advice Compendium* collects questions and answers about the rules of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (fifth edition). The document's version number changes when substantive additions or revisions have been made to the text. The newest material is preceded by the tag "[NEW]."

RULES REFERENCES

The fifth edition of D&D has three official rulebooks, each of which was first published in 2014:

- *Player's Handbook* (abbreviated *PH*)
- *Monster Manual* (abbreviated *MM*)
- *Dungeon Master's Guide* (abbreviated *DMG*)

The free *Basic Rules* contains portions of those three books and can be downloaded here:

<https://dnd.wizards.com/articles/features/basicrules>

Play in the Adventurers League is also governed by the Adventurers League Player's Guide.

ERRATA

Errata have been issued for certain fifth edition books and can be downloaded at the following locations.

[NEW] PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/PH-Errata.pdf>

MONSTER MANUAL

<https://media.wizards.com/2018/dnd/downloads/MM-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/DMG-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] CURSE OF STRAHD

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/CoS-Errata.pdf>

EBERRON: RISING FROM THE LAST WAR

<https://media.wizards.com/2020/dnd/downloads/ERftLW-Errata.pdf>

GHOSTS OF SALTMARSH

<https://media.wizards.com/2020/dnd/downloads/GoS-Errata.pdf>

HOARD OF THE DRAGON QUEEN

<https://media.wizards.com/2016/downloads/DND/HotDQ-Errata.pdf>

MORDENKAINEN'S TOME OF FOES

<https://media.wizards.com/2020/dnd/downloads/MTF-Errata.pdf>

OUT OF THE ABYSS

<https://media.wizards.com/2020/dnd/downloads/OotA-Errata.pdf>

PRINCES OF THE APOCALYPSE

<https://media.wizards.com/2016/downloads/DND/PotA-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] STORM KING'S THUNDER

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/SKT-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] SWORD COAST ADVENTURER'S GUIDE

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/SCAG-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] TALES FROM THE YAWNING PORTAL

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/TftYP-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] TASHA'S CAULDRON OF EVERYTHING

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/TCE-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] TOMB OF ANNIHILATION

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/ToA-Errata.pdf>

[NEW] VOLO'S GUIDE TO MONSTERS

<https://media.wizards.com/2021/dnd/downloads/VGtM-Errata.pdf>

XANATHAR'S GUIDE TO EVERYTHING

<https://media.wizards.com/2020/dnd/downloads/XGtE-Errata.pdf>

OFFICIAL RULINGS

Official rulings on how to interpret rules are made here in the *Sage Advice Compendium*. A Dungeon Master adjudicates the game and determines whether to use an official ruling in play. The DM always has the final say on rules questions.

The public statements of the D&D team, or anyone else at Wizards of the Coast, are not official rulings; they are advice. The tweets of Jeremy Crawford (@JeremyECrawford), the game's principal rules designer, are sometimes a preview of rulings that appear here.

COMPILED ANSWERS

Sage Advice answers that are relevant to the current state of the rules are compiled here.

THE ROLE OF RULES

Why even have a column like Sage Advice when a DM can just make a ruling? Rules are a big part of what makes D&D a game, rather than simply improvised storytelling. The game's rules are meant to help organize, and even inspire, the action of a D&D campaign. The rules are a tool, and we want our tools to be as effective as possible. No matter how good those tools might be, they need a group of players to bring them to life and a DM to guide their use.

The DM is key. Many unexpected things can happen in a D&D campaign, and no set of rules could reasonably account for every contingency. If the rules tried to do so, the game would become unplayable. An alternative would be for the rules to severely limit what characters can do, which would be counter to the open-endedness of D&D. The direction we chose for the current edition was to lay a foundation of rules that a DM could build on, and we embraced the DM's role as the bridge between the things the rules address and the things they don't.

In a typical D&D session, a DM makes numerous rules decisions—some barely noticeable and others quite obvi-

ous. Players also interpret the rules, and the whole group keeps the game running. There are times, though, when the design intent of a rule isn't clear or when one rule seems to contradict another.

Dealing with those situations is where Sage Advice comes in. This column doesn't replace a DM's adjudication. Just as the rules do, the column is meant to give DMs, as well as players, tools for tuning the game according to their tastes. The column should also reveal some perspectives that help you see parts of the game in a new light and that aid you in fine-tuning your D&D experience.

When I answer rules questions, I often come at them from one to three different perspectives.

RAW. "Rules as written"—that's what RAW stands for. When I dwell on the RAW interpretation of a rule, I'm studying what the text says in context, without regard to the designers' intent. The text is forced to stand on its own.

Whenever I consider a rule, I start with this perspective; it's important for me to see what you see, not what I wished we'd published or thought we'd published.

RAI. Some of you are especially interested in knowing the intent behind a rule. That's where RAI comes in: "rules as intended." This approach is all about what the designers meant when they wrote something. In a perfect world, RAW and RAI align perfectly, but sometimes the words on the page don't succeed at communicating the designers' intent. Or perhaps the words succeed with one group of players but not with another.

When I write about the RAI interpretation of a rule, I'll be pulling back the curtain and letting you know what the D&D team meant when we wrote a certain rule.

RAF. Regardless of what's on the page or what the designers intended, D&D is meant to be fun, and the DM is the ringmaster at each game table. The best DMs shape the game on the fly to bring the most delight to their players. Such DMs aim for RAF, "rules as fun."

We expect DMs to depart from the rules when running a particular campaign or when seeking the greatest happiness for a certain group of players. Sometimes my rules answers will include advice on achieving the RAF interpretation of a rule for your group.

I recommend a healthy mix of RAW, RAI, and RAF!

CHARACTER CREATION

How do you calculate a creature's Armor Class (AC)?

Chapter 1 of the *Player's Handbook* (p. 14) describes how to determine AC, yet AC calculations generate questions frequently. That fact isn't too surprising, given the number of ways the game gives you to change your AC!

Here are some ways to calculate your base AC:

Unarmored: 10 + your Dexterity modifier.

Armored: Use the AC entry for the armor you're wearing (see *PH*, 145). For example, in leather armor, you calculate your AC as 11 + your Dexterity modifier, and in chain mail, your AC is simply 16.

Unarmored Defense (Barbarian): 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Constitution modifier.

Unarmored Defense (Monk): 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Wisdom modifier.

Draconic Resilience (Sorcerer): 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

Natural Armor: 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your natural armor bonus. This is a calculation method typically used only by monsters and NPCs, although it is also relevant to a druid or another character who assumes a form that has natural armor.

These methods—along with any others that give you a formula for calculating your AC—are mutually exclusive; you can benefit from only one at a time. If you have access to more than one, you pick which one to use. For example, if you're a sorcerer/monk, you can use either Unarmored Defense or Draconic Resilience, not both. Similarly, a druid/barbarian who transforms into a beast form that has natural armor can use either the beast's natural armor or Unarmored Defense (you aren't considered to be wearing armor when you use natural armor).

What about a shield? A shield increases your AC by 2 while you use it. For example, if you're unarmored and use a shield, your AC is 12 + your Dexterity modifier. Keep in mind that some AC calculations, such as a monk's Unarmored Defense, prohibit the use of a shield.

Once you have your base AC, it can be temporarily modified by situational bonuses and penalties. For instance, having half cover gives you a +2 bonus to your AC, and three-quarters cover gives a +5 bonus. Spells sometimes modify AC as well. *Shield of faith*, for example, grants a target a +2 bonus to AC until the spell ends.

Magic items can also enhance your AC. Here are a few examples: *+1 chain mail* gives you an AC of 17, a *ring of protection* gives you a +1 bonus to AC no matter what you're wearing, and *bracers of defense* grant you a +2 bonus to AC if you're not wearing armor or using a shield.

RACIAL TRAITS

Does the Trance trait allow an elf to finish a long rest in 4 hours?

If an elf meditates during a long rest (as described in the Trance trait), the elf finishes the rest after only 4 hours. A meditating elf otherwise follows all the rules for a long rest; only the duration is changed.

Do the lightfoot halfling and wood elf hiding racial traits allow them to hide while observed?

The lightfoot halfling and wood elf traits—Naturally Stealthy and Mask of the Wild—do allow members of those subraces to try to hide in their special circumstances even when observers are nearby. Normally, you can't hide from someone if you're in full view. A lightfoot halfling, though, can try to vanish behind a creature that is at least one size larger, and a wood elf can try to hide simply by being in heavy rain, mist, falling snow, foliage, or similar natural phenomena. It's as if nature itself cloaks a wood elf from prying eyes—even eyes staring right at the elf! Both subraces are capable of hiding in situations when most other creatures can't, but neither subrace's hiding attempt is assured of success; a Dexterity (Stealth) check is required as normal,

and an observant foe might later spot a hidden halfling or elf: “I see you behind that guard, you tricky halfling!”

Can a dragonborn sorcerer with a draconic bloodline have two different kinds of Draconic Ancestry? A dragonborn sorcerer can choose a different ancestor for the racial trait and for the Dragon Ancestor feature. Your choice for the racial trait is your actual ancestor, while the choice for the class feature could be your ancestor figuratively—the type of dragon that bestowed magic upon you or your family or the kind of draconic artifact or location that filled you with magical energy.

How long do a shifter’s temporary hit points last? Unless a feature says otherwise, temporary hit points last until you finish a long rest (*PH*, 198).

Does all magical darkness block darkvision? Magical darkness blocks darkvision only if the rules text for a particular instance of darkness says it does. For example, the *darkness* spell specifies that it produces a magical darkness that obstructs darkvision. That obstruction is a feature of the spell, not of magical darkness in general.

CLASS FEATURES

When you use Extra Attack, do you have to use the same weapon for all the attacks? Extra Attack imposes no limitation on what you use for the attacks. You can use regular weapons, improvised weapons, unarmed strikes, or a combination of these options for the attacks.

ARTIFICER

What is the timing of Flash of Genius? You use Flash of Genius immediately after the triggering d20 is rolled and before any of the effects of the roll are applied. Unless a rule tells you otherwise, a reaction occurs immediately after its trigger.

Which action is used to activate a Spell-Storing Item? Activating a Spell-Storing Item uses the Use an Object action.

Can an artificer dismiss one of their infusions on an object early? No. An infusion lasts until one of the circumstances described in the “Infusing an Item” section of the Infuse Item feature.

BARBARIAN

Does the barbarian’s Danger Sense work against breath weapons and enemies’ special abilities? A barbarian’s Danger Sense benefits the Dexterity saving throw against any effect that the barbarian can see.

For the barbarian’s Reckless Attack, do you grant advantage to all enemies, or only to the target of your attack? If you use the barbarian’s Reckless Attack, all attack rolls have advantage against you until the start of your next turn.

BARD

Do the benefits from Bardic Inspiration and the *guidance* spell stack? Can they be applied to the same roll? Yes, different effects stack if they don’t have the same name. If a creature makes an ability check while it is un-

der the effect of a *guidance* spell and also has a Bardic Inspiration die, it can roll both a d4 and a d6 if it so chooses.

Is the intent that a bard gets to know the number rolled on an attack roll or ability check before using Cutting Words, or should they always guess? If used on a damage roll, does Cutting Words apply to any kind of damage roll including an auto-hit spell like *magic missile*? You can wait to use Cutting Words after the roll, but you must commit to doing so before you know for sure whether the total of the roll or check is a success or a failure. You can use Cutting Words to reduce the damage from any effect that calls for a damage roll (including *magic missile*) even if the damage roll is not preceded by an attack roll.

Can a bard replace spells gained through Magical Secrets? When you gain a level in the bard class, the class’s Spellcasting feature lets you replace one bard spell you know with another bard spell of an appropriate level. A spell learned through your Magical Secrets feature counts as a bard spell for you, so it can be replaced upon gaining a bard level later. But it must be replaced by a bard spell, according to the rule in the Spellcasting feature.

Which *spell scrolls* can bards understand—spells from the bard list only, or spells from the bard list plus spells from Magical Secrets? A bard can use any *spell scroll* that has a bard spell on it—including spells gained from the Magical Secrets feature, which are treated as bard spells for that character.

Does using College of Valor’s Combat Inspiration add to the damage of an attack count as a damage die for purposes of critical hits? Yes.

CLERIC

When a cleric uses the Destructive Wrath feature, does it maximize all damage getting rolled, as long as some of it is lightning or thunder? Destructive Wrath is meant to maximize lightning and thunder damage only.

If a Grave Domain cleric casts a spell that restores hit points to multiple creatures and one of those creatures has 0 hit points, does the spell restore the maximum number of hit points to all targets of the spell? No. Only a creature with 0 hit points benefits from the hit-point-restoration portion of the Circle of Mortality feature.

DRUID

What happens if a druid wears metal armor? The druid explodes.

Well, not actually. Druids have a taboo against wearing metal armor and wielding a metal shield. The taboo has been part of the class’s story since the class first appeared in *Eldritch Wizardry* (1976) and the original *Player’s Handbook* (1978). The idea is that druids prefer to be protected by animal skins, wood, and other natural materials that aren’t the worked metal that is associated with civilization. Druids don’t lack the ability to wear metal armor. They choose not to wear it. This choice is part of their identity as a mystical order. Think of it in these terms: a vegetarian can eat meat, but chooses not to.

A druid typically wears leather, studded leather, or hide armor, and if a druid comes across scale mail made of a material other than metal, the druid might wear it. If you feel strongly about your druid breaking the taboo and donning metal, talk to your DM. Each class has story elements mixed with its game features; the two types of design go hand in hand in D&D, and the story parts are stronger in some classes than in others. Druids and paladins have an especially strong dose of story in their design. If you want to depart from your class's story, your DM has the final say on how far you can go and still be considered a member of the class. As long as you abide by your character's proficiencies, you're not going to break anything in the game system, but you might undermine the story and the world being created in your campaign.

Can a bound and gagged druid simply use Wild Shape to get out? It's hard to capture someone who can turn into a mouse at will. Transforming into a different size can be an effective way of escaping, depending on the nature of the bonds or confinement. All things considered, someone trying to keep a druid captive might be wise to stash the prisoner in a room with an opening only large enough for air to enter.

Does the druid's Elemental Wild Shape limit you to the four creatures listed, or can you turn into any creature with the elemental type? The creatures listed in Elemental Wild Shape—air, earth, fire, and water elementals—are specific creatures in the *Monster Manual*, not creature types or subtypes. Elemental Wild Shape allows you to transform into one of those creatures.

Can a Circle of the Moon druid speak the languages it knows while in the form of an elemental? Yes, since the elementals listed in Elemental Wild Shape can speak.

A literal interpretation (RAW) of Wild Shape could reasonably lead you to think that transformed druids can speak only languages that appear in an elemental's stat block, but the intent (RAI) is that druids retain their knowledge, including of languages, when they transform and can speak the languages they know if an adopted form can speak.

If a druid in elemental form can speak, can the druid cast spells? A druid can cast spells in a Wild Shape form only upon gaining the Beast Spells feature at 18th level.

If a druid takes the Magic Initiate feat and chooses detect magic as their one spell, can the druid cast that spell as a ritual? A druid's Ritual Casting requires a ritual to be prepared. The spell from Magic Initiate is known but not prepared.

FIGHTER

Does the fighter's Action Surge feature let you take an extra bonus action, in addition to an extra action? Action Surge gives you an extra action, not an extra bonus action. (Recent printings of the *Player's Handbook* no longer include the wording that provoked this question.)

Can a fighter have two fighting styles active at once? Dueling and Defense, for example. You can benefit from

more than one Fighting Style option at a time, as long as they don't have conflicting requirements, as Dueling and Great Weapon Fighting do.

Does the Archery fighting style work with a melee weapon that you throw? No, the Archery feature benefits ranged weapons. A melee weapon, such as a dagger or handaxe, is still a melee weapon when you make a ranged attack with it.

Is the Dueling fighting style intended to support a shield? Yes. A character with the Dueling option usually pairs a one-handed weapon with a shield, a spellcasting focus, or a free hand.

If you use Great Weapon Fighting with a feature like Divine Smite or a spell like hex, do you get to reroll any 1 or 2 you roll for the extra damage? The Great Weapon Fighting feature—which is shared by fighters and paladins—is meant to benefit only the damage roll of the weapon used with the feature. For example, if you use a greatsword with the feature, you can reroll any 1 or 2 you roll on the weapon's 2d6. If you're a paladin and use Divine Smite with the greatsword, Great Weapon Fighting doesn't let you reroll a 1 or 2 that you roll for the damage of Divine Smite.

If my Battle Master fighter provokes an opportunity attack and it misses, can I use Riposte? Yes, you can use the Riposte maneuver in response to an opportunity attack that misses you, assuming your reaction is available.

Does the "when" in the Eldritch Knight's War Magic feature mean the bonus attack comes after you cast the cantrip, or can it come before? The bonus action comes after the cantrip, since using your action to cast a cantrip is what gives you the ability to make the weapon attack as a bonus action. That said, a DM would break nothing in the system by allowing an Eldritch Knight to reverse the order of the cantrip and the weapon attack.

If my Eldritch Knight casts true strike and has the War Magic feature, is the attack granted by War Magic made with advantage because of true strike? No. The attack from War Magic is made normally, and you get the benefit of *true strike* on your next turn if the spell hasn't ended.

Can the Disarming Attack maneuver disarm a creature of a shield it has donned? No. Disarming Attack forces a creature to drop an object it is holding. Donned shields aren't merely held.

MONK

If a monk uses a staff or another versatile weapon two-handed, does it still count as a monk weapon? Yes. A monk weapon must lack the two-handed property, but nothing prevents a monk from wielding such a weapon with two hands. Fundamentally, a monk weapon counts as such no matter how a monk uses it.

The dart is not classified as a monk weapon, yet a monk gets 10 darts as starting equipment. Why is that? Starting equipment often lends versatility to a character. In this

case, a monk's darts provide a ranged attack option, not a Martial Arts option.

Does the Martial Arts feature turn monk weapons and unarmed strikes into finesse weapons? No. The feature grants a benefit that is similar to the finesse property, but the feature doesn't confer that property.

When a monk using Deflect Missiles catches and throws a projectile, what is the damage of the attack? A missile counts as a monk weapon if it is thrown using Deflect Missiles; it deals its damage or Martial Arts damage (the monk's choice).

Can a monk use Stunning Strike with an unarmed strike, even though unarmed strikes aren't weapons? Yes. Stunning Strike works with melee weapon attacks, and an unarmed strike is a special type of melee weapon attack.

The game often makes exceptions to general rules, and this is an important exception: that unarmed strikes count as melee weapon attacks despite not being weapons.

When a monk uses Empty Body, does the invisibility remain in effect after the monk attacks? Yes. The invisibility of the monk's Empty Body isn't ended by the monk attacking.

Does a monk's Purity of Body feature grant immunity to poison damage, the poisoned condition, or both? That feature grants immunity to both. As a result, a monk with Purity of Body can, for example, inhale a green dragon's poison breath unharmed. Similarly, the monk is unaffected by *ray of sickness*, which both deals poison damage and imposes the poisoned condition.

Can the monk's Open Hand Technique push a Large or larger creature or knock it prone? The Open Hand Technique intentionally ignores creature size. A monk's ki fuels many extraordinary effects! If a feature is limited by creature size, the feature tells you so.

Does a monk need to spend any ki points to cast the *minor illusion* cantrip granted by the Shadow Arts feature? No. The ki point cost in the feature applies only to the other spells in it.

For a Way of Shadow monk, can their *silence* be dispelled? A spell is a spell, no matter its source. When you cast a spell through a feature, the spell is subject to the normal spellcasting rules, unless the feature says otherwise.

Can a monk of the Way of the Four Elements replace Elemental Attunement with another elemental discipline? Yes. Even though you know Elemental Attunement automatically, without having to choose it, you can exchange it for a different discipline at 6th, 11th, or 17th level.

PALADIN

Would a Paladin's Divine Sense register a tiefling due to their infernal heritage? A tiefling is a humanoid, not a fiend, and therefore escapes the notice of Divine Sense. The feature detects creatures that have the celestial, fiend, or undead creature type.

Can my paladin use a smite spell along with Divine Smite? As in, I cast *wrathful smite*, hit, then use Divine Smite on the same attack? Yes, you can use Divine Smite on the same weapon attack that benefits from a smite spell, such as *wrathful smite*—as long as the attack you make after casting the smite spell is a melee weapon attack. Divine Smite doesn't work with any other kind of attack.

[NEW] Can a paladin use Divine Smite when they hit using an unarmed strike? No. Divine Smite isn't intended to work with unarmed strikes.

Divine Smite does work with a melee weapon attack, and an unarmed strike can be used to make such an attack. But the text of Divine Smite also refers to the "weapon's damage," and an unarmed strike isn't a weapon.

If a DM decides to override this rule, no imbalance is created. Tying Divine Smite to weapons was a thematic choice on our part—paladins being traditionally associated with weapons. It was not a game balance choice.

RANGER

There is no component pouch option in the ranger's starting equipment. Does the class not need one, nor a focus for spells? Like other spellcasters, the ranger follows the rule on components in chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*. A ranger typically uses a component pouch for the material components of spells, but doesn't start with one because rangers don't have spells at 1st level.

Can a ranger move between the attack rolls of the Whirlwind Attack feature? No. Whirlwind Attack is unusual, in that it's a single attack with multiple attack rolls. In most other instances, an attack has one attack roll. The rule on moving between attacks (*PH*, 190) lets you move between weapon attacks, not between the attack rolls of an exceptional feature like Whirlwind Attack.

Does a Monster Slayer ranger's Supernatural Defense feature apply if a creature damages the ranger, thus causing the ranger to make a Constitution saving throw to maintain concentration on a spell? Yes.

ROGUE

Can a rogue use Sneak Attack more than once per round? The Sneak Attack description specifies that you can use the feature once per turn, but it's not limited to your turn. The feature also doesn't limit the number of times you can use it in a round.

You sometimes get a chance to use Sneak Attack on someone else's turn. The most common way for this to happen is when a foe provokes an opportunity attack from you. If the requirements for Sneak Attack are met, your opportunity attack can benefit from that feature. Similarly, a fighter could use Commander's Strike to grant you an attack on the fighter's turn, and if the attack qualifies, it can use Sneak Attack. Both of those options rely on the use of your reaction, so you could do only one of them in a round.

Because you get only one reaction per round, you're unlikely to use Sneak Attack more than twice in a round: once with your action and once with your reaction.

For Sneak Attack, what if another enemy of your target was 10 feet away with a polearm (which has a reach of 10 feet), instead of 5 feet away? Would you still be able to use Sneak Attack? The 5-foot limitation in Sneak Attack is unaffected by the reach of a weapon. That other enemy of the target is creating a close-up distraction, regardless of the weapon in hand.

Does Uncanny Dodge work automatically against every attack a rogue or ranger gets hit by? Spell attacks too?

A use of Uncanny Dodge works against only one attack, since it expends your reaction, and only if you can see the attacker. It works against attacks of all sorts, including spell attacks, but it is no help against a spell or other effect, such as *fireball*, that delivers its damage after a saving throw rather than after an attack roll.

Can a rogue use Evasion if they are surprised? The rule states that if you are surprised, you can't move or take an action. A surprised rogue can use Evasion, since that feature doesn't require the rogue to take an action or move.

Can the rogue's Reliable Talent feature be used in conjunction with Remarkable Athlete or Jack of All Trades?

No. Each of these features has a precondition for its use; Reliable Talent activates when you make an ability check that uses your proficiency bonus, whereas the other two features activate when you make an ability check that doesn't use your proficiency bonus. In other words, a check that qualifies for Reliable Talent doesn't qualify for Remarkable Athlete or Jack of All Trades. And Remarkable Athlete and Jack of All Trades don't work with each other, since you can add your proficiency bonus, or any portion thereof, only once to a roll.

Can a thief use the Fast Hands feature to activate a magic item? No. One of the benefits of Fast Hands is being able to take the Use an Object action as a bonus action, but using a magic item doesn't fall under Use an Object, as explained in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (p. 141). In contrast, using a nonmagical item, such as a healer's kit, is in the domain of Use an Object.

For triggering the rogue's Assassinate ability, when does a creature stop being surprised? After their turn in the round, or at the end of the round? A surprised creature stops being surprised at the end of its first turn in combat.

Does the Thief's Use Magic Device feature allow them to use spell scrolls? Yes. The intent is that a Thief can use *spell scrolls* with Use Magic Device.

Can a Thief use Fast Hands to use or apply poisons?

Yes. Administering poison uses the Use an Object action.

SORCERER

If a sorcerer casts a spell with only verbal or somatic components using Subtle Spell, can an opponent use counterspell against it? If a spell that's altered by Subtle Spell has no material component, then it's impossible for anyone to perceive the spell being cast. So, since you can't see the casting, *counterspell* is of no use.

Metamagic rules state you can't use multiple Metamagic options on a single spell. Can you use one option multiple times? A sorcerer can use one Metamagic option once in the casting of a spell, not the same option more than once. For instance, a sorcerer can't quadruple the duration of a spell by spending 2 sorcery points on Extended Spell.

Elemental Affinity improves one damage roll of a spell, not multiple rolls? So with *scorching ray*, I don't add my Charisma modifier to each ray that hits? That's correct. Elemental Affinity benefits one damage roll per casting of a spell, even if the spell allows more than one roll. So, for example, the feature improves one of the rays of a *scorching ray* spell or one of the beams of an *eldritch blast* spell.

Can Empowered Spell affect all the rays of a *scorching ray* spell, or just one? A sorcerer's Empowered Spell could affect more than one ray of a *scorching ray*, abiding by the feature's die limit. For instance, if you create three rays with the spell and you have a +3 Charisma modifier, you could reroll one of the damage dice for each ray, or two of the damage dice for one ray and one of the damage dice for another one.

Does Quicken Spell allow a sorcerer to cast two spells a round of 1st level or higher? No, the sorcerer must follow the rule for casting a spell as a bonus action and casting another spell on the same turn; the other spell must be a cantrip with a casting time of 1 action.

Can my sorcerer use Twinned Spell on a spell duplicated by the casting of a *wish* spell? And if so, how many sorcery points does it cost? Yes, you can. It costs the number of sorcery points appropriate for the level of the spell you're duplicating.

Does a sorcerer's Wild Magic Surge effect replace the effect of the spell that triggered it, or do both effects happen? The spell and the Wild Magic Surge effect both happen. As clarified in the errata for the *Player's Handbook*, a surge effect that normally requires concentration does not require concentration in this case.

Can my sorcerer use Twinned Spell to affect a particular spell? You can use Twinned Spell on a spell that ...

- targets only one creature
- doesn't have a range of self
- is incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level

If you know this rule yet are still unsure whether a particular spell qualifies for Twinned Spell, consult with your DM, who has the final say. If the two of you are curious about our design intent, here is the list of things that disqualify a spell for us:

- The spell has a range of self.
- The spell can target an object.
- The spell allows you to choose more than one creature to be affected by it, particularly at the level you're casting the spell. Some spells increase their number of potential targets when you cast them at a higher level.

- The spell can force more than one creature to make a saving throw before the spell's duration expires.
- The spell lets you make a roll of any kind that can affect more than one creature before the spell's duration expires.

WARLOCK

Do warlock spells granted by the Expanded Spell List feature count against the number of spells known? The spells granted by that feature aren't automatically known by a warlock. Those spells are added to the warlock spell list for the character, who can choose them when learning a new warlock spell of the appropriate level. Once learned, such a spell does count against the number of spells the warlock knows.

Does the Eyes of the Rune Keeper invocation work on magical runes? Eyes of the Rune Keeper lets you read any form of writing, including the linguistic meaning of a rune, if any.

If a warlock uses Pact of the Blade to bond with a magic weapon, does that weapon have to be a melee weapon, and can the warlock change the weapon's form? The warlock's Pact of the Blade feature (*PH*, 107–8) lets you create a melee weapon out of nothing. Whenever you do so, you determine the weapon's form, choosing from the melee weapon options in the Weapons table in the *Player's Handbook* (p. 149). For example, you can create a great-axe, and then use the feature again to create a javelin, which causes the greataxe to disappear.

You can also use Pact of the Blade to bond with a magic weapon, turning it into your pact weapon. This magic weapon doesn't have to be a melee weapon, so you could use the feature on a *+1 longbow*, for instance. Once the bond is formed, the magic weapon appears whenever you call your pact weapon to you, and you can't change the magic weapon's form when it appears. For example, if you bond with a *flame tongue* (longsword) and send the weapon to an extradimensional space, the weapon comes back as a longsword when you summon it. You don't get to turn it into a club. Similarly, if you bond with a *daggar of venom*, you can't summon it as a maul; it's always a dagger.

The feature allows the conjuring forth of a melee weapon, yet we allow more versatility when it comes to magic weapons. We didn't want a narrow focus in this feature to make a warlock unhappy when a variety of magic weapons appear in a campaign. Does this versatility extend outside the melee theme of the feature? It sure does, but we're willing to occasionally bend a design concept if doing so is likely to increase a player's happiness.

If you're a Pact of the Blade warlock, can someone else wield your pact weapon? Yes. Someone other than the warlock can use a pact weapon before the weapon disappears.

Does the warlock's Awakened Mind feature allow two-way telepathic communication? The feature is intended to provide one-way communication. The warlock can use the feature to speak telepathically to a creature, but the

feature doesn't give that creature the ability to telepathically reply. In contrast, the telepathy ability that some monsters have (*MM*, 9) does make two-way communication possible.

Does using a bonus action break invisibility from a warlock's One with Shadows invocation? Taking a bonus action breaks the invisibility of a warlock's One with Shadows. A bonus action is an action.

WIZARD

Is an abjurer's Arcane Ward healed only when the ward has 0 hit points? The ward regains hit points whenever the abjurer casts an abjuration spell of 1st level or higher, not just when the ward has 0 hit points. As is normal for healing, the ward can't regain more hit points than its hit point maximum: twice the wizard's level + the wizard's Intelligence modifier.

Does casting *alarm* as a ritual heal Arcane Ward? Any abjuration spell of 1st level or higher cast by an abjurer, including a ritual, can restore hit points to the abjurer's Arcane Ward.

How does Arcane Ward interact with temporary hit points and damage resistance that an abjurer might have? An Arcane Ward is not an extension of the wizard who creates it. It is a magical effect with its own hit points. Any temporary hit points, immunities, or resistances that the wizard has don't apply to the ward.

The ward takes damage first. Any leftover damage is taken by the wizard and goes through the following game elements in order: (1) any relevant damage immunity, (2) any relevant damage resistance, (3) any temporary hit points, and (4) real hit points.

An abjurer gains resistance to spell damage at 14th level. Does the abjurer's Arcane Ward gain this resistance when a spell hits the abjurer? The abjurer, not the Arcane Ward, gains the resistance at 14th level.

Does the evoker's Potent Cantrip feature apply to cantrips with attack rolls or only to saves? Potent Cantrip affects only cantrips that require a saving throw, such as *acid splash* and *poison spray*.

Does the 14th-level illusionist ability let you make something real every round, or just once? Illusory Reality is intended to make one illusory object real per illusion spell.

For the Shapechanger feature of the School of Transmutation, does *polymorph* need to be prepared if I only want to cast it without using a spell slot? A transmuter must have *polymorph* prepared, as normal, to cast it with the Shapechanger feature.

Can Minor Conjunction create a copy of a book, complete with all its text, if the wizard hasn't seen all the text? No. In the case of a multipart object, the intent is that you must have seen all parts of the object to duplicate those parts. In the case of a book, if you have seen only the cover, then the duplicate created will be a copy of the cover, and the pages will be blank.

Can a School of Divination wizard on the Ethereal Plane use Portent on a creature that the wizard can see on the Material Plane? Yes. Portent requires you to be able to see the creature, but it has no range restriction.

For a wizard to cast a ritual spell contained in their spellbook, do they need to read from the book or use it as part of the ritual? No. As written, the rule doesn't require you to read from the book. The narrative intent, however, is that the wizard is reading from their book, but the only mechanical requirement is that the wizard has the spell in their spellbook.

BACKGROUNDS

Can you have more than one background? No. You can have only one background. It establishes key aspects of your life before you embarked on a life of adventure. If none of the backgrounds available matches your character concept, talk with your DM and use the guidelines on page 125 of the *Player's Handbook* to customize your own background.

EQUIPMENT

Does heavy armor reduce Dexterity saving throws or ability checks other than Stealth? If you have proficiency with it, heavy armor doesn't affect Dexterity saving throws or ability checks, other than Stealth.

If you attack with a shield—most likely as an improvised weapon—do you keep the +2 bonus to AC? Attacking with a shield doesn't deprive you of the shield's bonus to AC.

MULTICLASSING

Are ability score improvements class-level dependent, rather than total level? Ability score improvements are based on your level in a particular class, not your total character level if you multiclass. For instance, if you're a 4th-level multiclass character, you haven't yet received the Ability Score Improvement feature because you haven't attained 4th level in one of your classes.

Would a temporary stat bump fulfill a multiclass prerequisite, or does the base score have to meet the requirement? Your base score, not a temporary score, has to meet a multiclassing prerequisite.

When multiclassing, do you get the cantrips from all your classes? If any of your classes grants you cantrips, you get all of them.

Do you gain proficiency in more saving throws when multiclassing? A class offers various starting proficiencies that you get if it is your first class. If the class isn't your first, you get only the starting proficiencies listed for that class in the Multiclassing Proficiencies table (*PH*, 164). No saving throw proficiencies are included in that table.

Regardless of whether a class is your first, you do gain any proficiencies that the class grants through its features. For instance, if you gain a level in cleric and choose the

War Domain, you do benefit from the Bonus Proficiencies feature, even if cleric isn't your first class.

Can a barbarian/cleric use *spiritual weapon* to attack while raging, if it is cast before entering rage? A barbarian's Rage feature makes concentration impossible but has no effect on spells, like *spiritual weapon*, that don't require concentration.

Can a barbarian/fighter (Battle Master) use maneuvers while raging? Nothing in the barbarian's Rage feature precludes the use of maneuvers.

Can a rogue/monk use Sneak Attack with unarmed strikes? The Sneak Attack feature works with a weapon that has the finesse or ranged property. An unarmed strike isn't a weapon, so it doesn't qualify. In contrast, a rogue/monk can use Sneak Attack with a monk weapon, such as a shortsword or a dagger, that has one of the required properties.

A wizard multiclasses into Wild Magic sorcerer. Do spells cast from their spellbook trigger Wild Magic Surge if they are on the sorcerer spell list, or do they have to gain them from sorcerer to trigger? From the multiclassing rules: "Each spell you know and prepare is associated with one of your classes" (*PH*, 164). This rule means only the spells gained from levels in sorcerer trigger Wild Magic Surge.

FEATS

CHARGER

If you have the Charger feat, can you make your charge attack when your mount takes the Dash action? The Charger feat relies on you, not your mount, taking the Dash action.

CROSSBOW EXPERT

Is it intentional that the second benefit of Crossbow Expert helps ranged spell attacks? Yes, it's intentional. When you make a ranged attack roll within 5 feet of an enemy, you normally suffer disadvantage (*PH*, 195). The second benefit of Crossbow Expert prevents you from suffering that disadvantage, whether or not the ranged attack is with a crossbow.

When designing a feat with a narrow use, we consider adding at least one element that can benefit a character more broadly—a bit of mastery that your character brings from one situation to another. The second benefit of Crossbow Expert is such an element, as is the first benefit of Great Weapon Master. That element in Crossbow Expert shows that some of the character's expertise with one type of thing—crossbows, in this case—transfers to other things.

Do the first and third benefits of Crossbow Expert turn a hand crossbow into a semiautomatic weapon? The short answer is no.

The first benefit of the feat lets you ignore the loading property (*PH*, 147) of the hand crossbow if you're proficient with that weapon. The upshot is that you can fire it more than once if you have a feature like Extra Attack.

You're still limited, however, by the fact that the weapon has the ammunition property (*PH*, 146). The latter property requires you to have a bolt to fire from the hand crossbow, and the hand crossbow isn't going to load itself (unless it's magical or a gnomish invention). You need to load each bolt into the weapon, and doing so requires a hand.

To dig deeper into this point, take a look at the following sentence in the definition of the ammunition property: "Drawing the ammunition from a quiver, case, or other container is part of the attack." The sentence tells us two important things. First, you're assumed to be drawing—that is, extracting with your hand—the ammunition from a container. Second, the act of drawing the ammunition is included in the attack and therefore doesn't require its own action and doesn't use up your free interaction with an object on your turn.

What does that all mean for a hand crossbow? It means Crossbow Expert makes it possible to fire a hand crossbow more than once with a feature like Extra Attack, provided that you have enough ammunition and you have a hand free to load it for each shot.

Does Crossbow Expert let you fire a hand crossbow and then fire it again as a bonus action? It does! Take a look at the feat's third benefit. It says you can attack with a hand crossbow as a bonus action when you use the Attack action to attack with a one-handed weapon. A hand crossbow is a one-handed weapon, so it can, indeed, be used for both attacks, assuming you have a hand free to load the hand crossbow between the two attacks.

DUAL WIELDER

Can my character wield two heavy weapons if she has the Dual Wielder feat? No. The Dual Wielder feat lets you wield two one-handed weapons. Every heavy weapon in the *Player's Handbook* also has the two-handed property.

ELEMENTAL ADEPT

Is Elemental Adept the only feat you can take more than once? Elemental Adept is the only feat in the *Player's Handbook* that you can take more than once.

GREAT WEAPON MASTER

With the Great Weapon Master feat, do you have to take the bonus action immediately, or could you move and then use it on the same turn? You take the bonus action on your turn, anytime after you hit with the attack that grants the bonus action. So yes, you can move before taking the bonus action (if you have movement remaining).

LUCKY

How does the Lucky feat interact with advantage and disadvantage? The Lucky feat represents extraordinary luck that can help you when you need it most. It lets you spend a luck point; roll an extra d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw; and then choose which d20 to use. This is true no matter how many d20s are in the mix. For example, if you have advantage or disadvantage on your attack roll, you could spend a luck point, roll a third d20, and then decide which of the three dice to use. You still have advantage or disadvantage, since the feat doesn't

say it negates it, but you get to pick the die. The upshot of this fact is that a rogue, for instance, who has disadvantage on an attack roll couldn't use Sneak Attack even if the rogue uses the Lucky feat to pick the die.

The Lucky feat is a great example of an exception to a general rule. The general rule in this case is the one that tells us how advantage and disadvantage work (*PH*, 173). The specific rule is the Lucky feat, and we know that a specific rule trumps a general rule if they conflict with each other (*PH*, 7).

If a DM wants advantage and disadvantage to play their normal roles even when the Lucky feat is used, here's a way to do so: roll two d20s for advantage/disadvantage, roll a third d20 for Lucky, eliminate one of the three dice, and then use the higher (for advantage) or lower (for disadvantage) of the two dice that remain.

MAGIC INITIATE

If you're a spellcaster, can you pick your own class when you gain the Magic Initiate feat? Yes, the feat doesn't say you can't. For example, if you're a wizard and gain the Magic Initiate feat, you can choose wizard and thereby learn two more wizard cantrips and another 1st-level wizard spell.

If you have spell slots, can you use them to cast the 1st-level spell you learn with the Magic Initiate feat?

Yes, but only if the class you pick for the feat is one of your classes. For example, if you pick sorcerer and you are a sorcerer, the Spellcasting feature for that class tells you that you can use your spell slots to cast the sorcerer spells you know, so you can use your spell slots to cast the 1st-level sorcerer spell you learn from Magic Initiate. Similarly, if you are a wizard and pick that class for the feat, you learn a 1st-level wizard spell, which you could add to your spellbook and subsequently prepare.

In short, you must follow your character's normal spellcasting rules, which determine whether you can expend spell slots on the 1st-level spell you learn from Magic Initiate.

POLEARM MASTER

Can I add my Strength modifier to the damage of the bonus attack that Polearm Master gives me? Yes. If you have the feat and use the Attack action to attack with a glaive, halberd, or quarterstaff, you can also strike with the weapon's opposite end as a bonus action. For that bonus attack, you add your ability modifier to the attack roll, as you do whenever you attack with that weapon, and if you hit, you add the same ability modifier to the damage roll, which is normal for weapon damage rolls (*PH*, 196).

A specific rule, such as the rule for two-weapon fighting (*PH*, 195), might break the general rule by telling you not to add your ability modifier to the damage. Polearm Master doesn't have such a rule.

Does Polearm Master let me make an opportunity attack against a target that is being forced to approach me? A creature doesn't provoke an opportunity attack if it is moved without the use of its movement, its action, or its reaction. For example, the effect of the *antipathy/sympathy*

spell requires the target to use its movement, meaning that it would provoke opportunity attacks when it does so. Similarly, *dissonant whispers* requires the target to move using its reaction (if available), so that activity also provokes opportunity attacks. In contrast, a creature that's pushed by a *gust of wind* spell does not provoke opportunity attacks.

SAVAGE ATTACKER

Does the Savage Attacker feat work with unarmed strikes? No. Savage Attacker relies on a weapon's damage dice, and an unarmed strike isn't a weapon (a point that was clarified in the *Player's Handbook* errata).

Does the benefit of the Savage Attacker feat apply to additional effects like the rogue's Sneak Attack or the paladin's Divine Smite? No. The benefit of Savage Attacker applies only to rolls of the weapon's damage dice, not to any extra damage that a feature or other ability might grant.

SENTINEL

Does the attack granted by the third benefit of the Sentinel feat take place before or after the triggering attack? The bonus attack takes place after the triggering attack. Here's why: the feat doesn't specify the bonus attack's timing, and when a reaction has no timing specified, the reaction occurs after its trigger finishes (*DMG*, 252). In contrast, an opportunity attack specifically takes place before its trigger finishes—that is, right before the target creature leaves your reach (*PH*, 195).

How does the Sentinel feat work against an enemy that has Fancy Footwork or the Mobile feat? Does the character with the Sentinel feat still get the opportunity attack? The second benefit of the Sentinel feat is intended to counteract the Disengage action only. An enemy with the Fancy Footwork feature (*Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*) or one that has the Mobile feat can avoid provoking opportunity attacks from someone who has the Sentinel feat, as long as that enemy doesn't take the Disengage action.

SHIELD MASTER

The Shield Master feat lets you shove someone as a bonus action if you take the Attack action. Can you take that bonus action before the Attack action? No. The bonus action provided by the Shield Master feat has a precondition: that you take the Attack action on your turn. Intending to take that action isn't sufficient; you must actually take it before you can take the bonus action. During your turn, you do get to decide when to take the bonus action after you've taken the Attack action.

This sort of if-then setup appears in many of the game's rules. The "if" must be satisfied before the "then" comes into play.

TOUGH

Does the Tough feat have an effect for a druid while in beast form? The intent is no. The Tough feat affects a druid's hit points, which are replaced by the beast's hit points while using Wild Shape.

ABILITY CHECKS

Are attack rolls and saving throws basically specialized ability checks? They aren't. It's easy to mistake the three rolls as three faces of the same thing, because they each involve rolling a d20, adding any modifiers, and comparing the total to a Difficulty Class, and they're all subject to advantage and disadvantage. In short, they share the same procedure for determining success or failure.

Despite this common procedure, the three rolls are separate from each other. If something in the game, like the *guidance* spell, affects one of them, the other two aren't affected unless the rules specifically say so. The next few questions touch on this point again.

Can you get a critical hit on an ability check? For example, on a grapple attempt, does a critical win, or the highest number? Ability checks don't score critical hits. Attack rolls do.

Is a 1 on an ability check an automatic failure? Rolling a 1 on an ability check or a saving throw is not an automatic failure. A 1 is an automatic miss for an attack roll.

If you cast the *hex* spell and choose Strength as the affected ability, does the target also have disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws that use Strength?

No, the *hex* spell's description says it affects ability checks that use the chosen ability. The description says nothing about affecting attack rolls or saving throws. This means, for example, that if you choose Constitution, the spell's target doesn't suffer disadvantage when trying to maintain concentration on a spell, since concentration requires a Constitution saving throw, not a Constitution check.

Curious about the spell's intent? The spell is meant to be a classic jinx—the sort seen in folklore—that is useful in and out of combat. In combat, the spell provides some extra necrotic damage. Outside combat, you could foil a cunning diplomat, for example, by casting the spell and imposing disadvantage on his or her Charisma checks.

Does the bard's Jack of All Trades feature apply to attack rolls and saving throws that don't use the bard's proficiency bonus? No. The feature benefits only ability checks. Don't forget that initiative rolls are Dexterity checks, so Jack of All Trades can benefit a bard's initiative, assuming the bard isn't already adding his or her proficiency bonus to it.

When you make a Strength (Athletics) check to grapple or shove someone, are you making an attack roll? No. That check is an ability check, so game effects tied to attack rolls don't apply to it. Going back to an earlier question, the *hex* spell could be used to diminish a grappler's effectiveness. And if the grappler's target is under the effect of the Dodge action, that action doesn't inhibit the grapple, since Dodge doesn't affect ability checks.

ADVENTURING

Is there a hard limit on how many short rests characters can take in a day, or is this purely up to the DM to decide? The only hard limit on the number of short rests

you can take is the number of hours in a day. In practice, you're also limited by time pressures in the story and foes interrupting.

Are extradimensional spaces, such as a demiplane or the space created by *rope trick*, considered to be on a different plane of existence? An extradimensional space (aka an extraplanar space) is outside other planes. Therefore, if you're on the Material Plane and your foe is in an extradimensional space, the two of you aren't on the same plane of existence.

How do I tell if something in the game is magical? For an extensive discussion of this topic, see the question "Is the breath weapon of a dragon magical?" in the "Monsters" section below.

What's an example of an effect that can reduce exhaustion? The *greater restoration* spell can reduce exhaustion.

Is there a way to get lost Intelligence back, such as after an intellect devourer zeroes it? The *greater restoration* spell can remove the reduction to an ability score.

What happens after 20th level? Is there a cap to character levels? The highest level is 20th. The "Epic Boons" section in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (p. 231) offers ideas for further advancement.

The frightened condition says "while the source of its fear is within line of sight." Does that mean you have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks even if the source is invisible but you have a clear line to its space? No. If you can't see something, it's not within your line of sight. Speaking of "line of sight," the game uses the English meaning of the term, which has no special meaning in the rules.

Does casting a spell while taking a short rest interrupt the rest? Yes. Spellcasting is more strenuous than the activities listed on page 186 of the *Player's Handbook*: "eating, drinking, reading, and tending to wounds."

COMBAT

Does surprise happen outside the initiative order as a special surprise round? No, here's how surprise works.

The first step of any combat is this: the DM determines whether anyone in the combat is surprised (reread "Combat Step by Step" on page 189 of the *Player's Handbook*). This determination happens only once during a fight and only at the beginning. In other words, once a fight starts, you can't be surprised again, although a hidden foe can still gain the normal benefits from being unseen (see "Unseen Attackers and Targets" on page 194 of the *Player's Handbook*).

To be surprised, you must be caught off guard, usually because you failed to notice foes being stealthy or you were startled by an enemy with a special ability, such as the gelatinous cube's Transparent trait, that makes it exceptionally surprising. You can be surprised even if your companions aren't, and you aren't surprised if even one of your foes fails to catch you unawares.

If anyone is surprised, no actions are taken yet. First, initiative is rolled as normal. Then, the first round of combat starts, and the unsurprised combatants act in initiative order. A surprised creature can't move or take an action or a reaction until its first turn ends (remember that being unable to take an action also means you can't take a bonus action). In effect, a surprised creature skips its first turn in a fight. Once that turn ends, the creature is no longer surprised.

In short, activity in a combat is always ordered by initiative, whether or not someone is surprised, and after the first round of combat has passed, surprise is no longer a factor. You can still try to hide from your foes and gain the benefits conferred by being hidden, but you don't deprive your foes of their turns when you do so.

Surprise rules work for two opposing sides. What happens with surprise when a third group of combatants sneaks up, hidden from the melee, and ambushes? The surprise rule is relevant only when a combat is starting. Any ambushes during the fight use the rules for Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

If a wizard casts a spell like *fireball* during a surprise round, do the enemies get disadvantage on their saving throw? Being surprised has no effect on saves. If you're surprised, you can't move or take an action on your first turn of the combat and you can't take a reaction until that turn ends (*PH*, 189).

Can you delay your turn and take it later in the round? No. When it's your turn, either you do something or you don't. If you don't want to do anything, consider taking the Dodge action so that you'll, at least, have some extra protection. If you want to wait to act in response to something, take the Ready action, which lets you take part of your turn later.

For a variety of reasons, we didn't include the option to delay your turn:

- Your turn involves several decisions, including where to move and what action to take. If you could delay your turn, your decision-making would possibly become slower, since you would have to consider whether you wanted to take your turn at all. Multiply that extra analysis by the number of characters and monsters in a combat, and you have the potential for many slow-downs in play.
- The ability to delay your turn can make initiative meaningless, as characters and monsters bounce around in the initiative order. If combatants can change their place in the initiative order at will, why use initiative at all? On top of that, changing initiative can easily turn into an unwelcome chore, especially for the DM, who might have to change the initiative list over and over during a fight.
- Being able to delay your turn can let you wreak havoc on the durations of spells and other effects, particularly any of them that last until your next turn. Simply by changing when your turn happens, you could change the length of certain spells. The way to guard against such abuse would be to create a set of additional rules

that would limit your ability to change durations. The net effect? More complexity would be added to the game, and with more complexity, there is greater potential for slower play.

Two of our goals for combat were for it to be speedy and for initiative to matter. We didn't want to start every combat by rolling initiative and then undermine turn order with a delay option. Moreover, we felt that toying with initiative wasn't where the focus should be in battle. Instead, the dramatic actions of the combatants should be the focus, with turns that happen as quickly as possible.

I have a readied action. Can I stop readying to take an opportunity attack? Or is ready a full turn commitment? If you have an action readied, you can make an opportunity attack, which causes you to stop readying.

Can a bonus action be used as an action or vice versa? For example, can a bard use a bonus action to grant a Bardic Inspiration die and an action to cast *healing word*? No. Actions and bonus actions aren't interchangeable. In the example, the bard could use Bardic Inspiration or *healing word* on a turn, not both.

Can a flying creature without the hover trait stay in one place while airborne, or does it need to move each round? A flyer that lacks the hover trait can stay aloft without moving each round.

Can you move through the space of a prone enemy? The prone condition doesn't override the rule that prevents you from moving through an enemy's space, unless that enemy is at least two sizes larger or two sizes smaller than you. If you do move through the space of another creature—whether a friend or an enemy—the space is difficult terrain for you, and you can't willingly end your move there. See the *Player's Handbook*, page 190–2, for more on movement in combat.

Does travel pace apply to movement in combat, or just when traveling? The travel pace rule (*PH*, 181–2) doesn't apply in combat.

If you have a feature like Cunning Action or Step of the Wind, can you take the Dash action more than once on your turn? If you can take the Dash action as a bonus action, nothing in the rules prevents you from taking the Dash action with your regular action too. The same principle holds when you use a feature like Action Surge; you could use both of your actions to take the Dash action.

My rogue/wizard can get a bonus action to Dash by using Cunning Action, and I can cast *expeditious retreat* on myself to get a bonus action to Dash. Do I get two bonus actions to Dash? No. You can take only one bonus action on your turn (*PH*, 189). If you have two or more ways to use a bonus action, you must choose which one (if any) you want to employ on your turn.

If you use the Help action to distract a foe, do you have to stay within 5 feet of it for the action to work? No, you can take the action and then move away. The action itself is what grants advantage to your ally, not your staying next to the foe.

If I'm invisible and I become visible when I shoot an arrow at a target, does hiding again require an action? Without a special ability, hiding in combat requires the Hide action.

If I use the Ready action to deal damage to someone who's moving, do I deny the target the rest of its movement? Dealing damage to a moving target doesn't halt its movement, unless the damage is accompanied by an ability that stops movement. Things like the Sentinel feat give you such an ability. Reducing a moving creature to 0 hit points is also usually an effective way to stop it!

Can you use the Ready action to take the Dash action on someone else's turn and then combine the Charger feat with it? No, since you can't take a bonus action on someone else's turn.

For readying a spell or other action, does the target have to be in range? Your target must be within range when you take a readied action, not when you first ready it.

How does readying a spell work? Do you lose your spell slot if the trigger never occurs? A readied spell's slot is lost if you don't release the spell with your reaction before the start of your next turn.

Can a readied action occur during an enemy's triggering action, such as between its first and second attacks when it uses Multiattack? A readied action occurs immediately after its trigger. If you defined the trigger as an attack, your action happens after that attack.

How do I know which ability modifier to use with an attack roll and its damage roll? The *Player's Handbook* specifies which ability modifier to use with an attack roll (p. 194) and which one to use with the corresponding damage roll (p. 196). Here's a summary:

Attack Type	Attack Roll	Damage Roll
Melee weapon attack	Strength mod.*	Strength mod.
Ranged weapon attack	Dexterity mod.*	Dexterity mod.
Spell attack	Spellcasting ability mod.**	Depends on effect

* Add your proficiency bonus if you're using a weapon with which you're proficient.

** Add your proficiency bonus. Your spellcasting ability is determined by your class or whatever feature gave you the ability to make the spell attack.

For example, if you make a melee weapon attack with a longsword, you add your Strength modifier to the attack and damage rolls of the attack. In contrast, if you make the spell attack of the *fire bolt* cantrip, you add your spellcasting ability modifier to the attack roll. If you're a wizard, Intelligence is your spellcasting ability, so add your Intelligence modifier. *Fire bolt* doesn't tell you to add your modifier to its damage roll, though, so you don't.

Various features in the game make explicit exceptions to the rule. For example, a weapon that has the finesse property lets you choose whether to use your Strength or

Dexterity modifier with it. Another example: when you use the two-weapon fighting option in the *Player's Handbook* (p. 195), you don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack, unless that modifier is negative. You do, however, still add your ability modifier to the attack roll, since the option doesn't tell you not to. In other words, you follow the general rule until an exception in the game tells you not to.

What about unusual cases like the *green-flame blade* spell? The spell, which appears in the *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*, tells you to make a melee attack with a weapon. Look at the table above, and you see that, under normal circumstances, you use your Strength modifier when you make a melee weapon attack. It doesn't matter that a spell told you to attack. If a spell expects you to make a spell attack, the spell's description says so. For examples, take a look at *fire bolt* and *ray of frost*. Both say it—"spell attack."

What does "melee weapon attack" mean: a melee attack with a weapon or an attack with a melee weapon?

It means a melee attack with a weapon. Similarly, "ranged weapon attack" means a ranged attack with a weapon. Some attacks count as a melee or ranged weapon attack even if a weapon isn't involved, as specified in the text of those attacks. For example, an unarmed strike counts as a melee weapon attack, even though the attacker's body isn't considered a weapon.

Here's a bit of wording minutia: we would write "melee-weapon attack" (with a hyphen) if we meant an attack with a melee weapon.

How does a reach weapon work with opportunity attacks? An opportunity attack is normally triggered when a creature you can see moves beyond your reach (*PH*, 195). If you want to make an opportunity attack with a reach weapon, such as a glaive or a halberd, you can do so when a creature leaves the reach you have with that weapon. For example, if you're wielding a halberd, a creature that is right next to you could move 5 feet away without triggering an opportunity attack. If that creature tries to move an additional 5 feet—beyond your 10-foot reach—the creature then triggers an opportunity attack.

Can a blinded creature make an opportunity attack? An opportunity attack is triggered by "a hostile creature you can see" (*PH*, 195). If you can't see an enemy, you can't make an opportunity attack against it. Creatures with blindsight are an exception to this rule, because that ability lets those creatures "see" within a certain radius.

Can an opportunity attack be used to make a grapple or a shove? Grappling and shoving are special melee attacks that require the Attack action (*PH*, 195). An opportunity attack is a special reaction. Take the Ready action if you want to attempt a grapple or a shove as a reaction.

When you use two-weapon fighting, can you draw and throw two weapons on your turn? You can throw two weapons with two-weapon fighting (*PH*, 195), but that rule doesn't give you the ability to draw two weapons for free.

On your turn, you can interact with one object for free,

either during your move or during an action (*PH*, 190). One of the most common object interactions is drawing or stowing a weapon. Interacting with a second object on the same turn requires an action. You need a feature like the Dual Wielder feat to draw or stow a second weapon for free.

With two-weapon fighting, can I use both attacks (normal and bonus) to shove a creature? No. Two-weapon fighting (*PH*, 195) doesn't grant the bonus attack unless the first attack is made with a light melee weapon. Shoving a creature is a special melee attack that does not involve the use of a weapon.

If a creature is grappled, can it still attack and use its special abilities? The grappled condition limits movement, not attacks, spellcasting, and the like. That said, many grappling abilities, such as a roper's tendril attack, also deliver effects like the restrained condition.

Is the grappling rule in the *Player's Handbook* usable by a handless creature? The grappling rule (*PH*, 195) was written for a grappler with at least one hand, but a DM can easily adapt the rule for a handless creature that has a bite or an appendage, such as a tentacle, that could reasonably seize someone. A wolf, for example, could plausibly try to seize a person with its bite, and the animal wouldn't be able to use its bite attack as long as it held onto the person.

Keep in mind that the grappling rule in the *Player's Handbook* requires the Attack action, so a creature must take that action—rather than Multiattack or another action in the creature's stat block—when it uses that rule. A monster, such as a roper, that has a special grappling attack doesn't follow that rule when using its special attack.

Does a grapple or a shove trigger the Tempest cleric's Wrath of the Storm or a Battle Master's Riposte? The answer to both questions is no. The grappling and shoving options (*PH*, 195) don't result in a hit or a miss.

Say I grapple you, then I drop prone. Are we now prone together? No. A creature you're grappling isn't knocked prone if you become prone. You're now holding onto the creature from a prone position.

Target at range caught in melee combat—does that target get some kind of cover or do I get disadvantage? Your target has half-cover if another creature is between you and the target (*PH*, 196).

Can damage be reduced to 0 by resistance or another form of damage reduction? There is no damage minimum in the rules, so it is possible to deal 0 damage with an attack, a spell, or another effect.

A dragon uses a breath weapon against me. I succeed on the save, and I have resistance to the damage. Do I take only one-quarter of the damage? Yes, because resistance is applied after all other modifiers to damage (*PH*, 197). If you succeed on a save and still take damage, that damage is halved if you have the right resistance.

Is the intent that only melee weapon attacks can knock foes unconscious, or can melee spell attacks as well? If you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, you can knock the creature out (*PH*, 198). That melee attack isn't restricted to weapons. Even a melee spell attack can be used to knock a creature out.

Are attacks with a net always made with disadvantage? Unless you have a special ability that says otherwise, any net attack has disadvantage because you're either within 5 feet of your target (see *PH*, 149) or you're attacking at long range, which is between 5 and 15 feet for a net.

Can a non-Battle Master attempt to disarm someone? The Disarming Attack maneuver is designed for the Battle Master archetype, but anyone can try to disarm a foe. The Disarm action option (*DMG*, 271) provides one way a DM might adjudicate the activity.

Are natural weapons considered weapons? Things designated as weapons by the rules, including natural weapons, are indeed weapons. In contrast, unarmed strikes are not weapons. They are something you do with an unarmed part of your body.

Can I make an attack with one weapon, then draw a second weapon with my other hand and qualify to use two-weapon fighting? To use the two-weapon fighting bonus action (*PH*, 195), you must have both weapons in hand when you make the first attack. If you're instead fighting with two or more weapons as part of the Extra Attack feature, the rule for the two-weapon fighting bonus action doesn't apply. The rule for that bonus action applies only to itself, not to any other use of two or more weapons in the game.

SPELLCASTING

Can a spellcaster cast spells off-target to minimize damage to party members from a spell like *shatter*? The spellcaster chooses where to place the point of origin of a spell like *shatter* and may, therefore, choose a position that is advantageous to allies.

Can permanent magical effects be dispelled? Or are they no longer considered magical effects once permanent? If the effect of a spell becomes permanent, it can be dispelled, unless its description says otherwise (such as in the *wall of stone* spell).

Do spellcasters have to learn a ritual version of a spell apart from the normal version, or are they the same? To cast the ritual version of a spell you know, you need a feature, such as Ritual Casting, that gives you the ability to cast the spell as a ritual. You don't need to also learn a special version of the spell.

Can spellcasters prepare spells not all at once, but prepare spells at various times in the day? You prepare your list of spells only at the end of a long rest. You can't prepare some spells at the end of the rest and then prepare more later.

Do you always know when you're under the effect of a spell? You're aware that a spell is affecting you if it has a

perceptible effect or if its text says you're aware of it (see *PH*, 204, under "Targets"). Most spells are obvious. For example, *fireball* burns you, *cure wounds* heals you, and *command* forces you to suddenly do something you didn't intend. Certain spells are more subtle, yet you become aware of the spell at a time specified in the spell's description. *Charm person* and *detect thoughts* are examples of such spells.

Some spells are so subtle that you might not know you were ever under their effects. A prime example of that sort of spell is *suggestion*. Assuming you failed to notice the spellcaster casting the spell, you might simply remember the caster saying, "The treasure you're looking for isn't here. Go look for it in the room at the top of the next tower." You failed your saving throw, and off you went to the other tower, thinking it was your idea to go there. You and your companions might deduce that you were beguiled if evidence of the spell is found. It's ultimately up to the DM whether you discover the presence of inconspicuous spells. Discovery usually comes through the use of skills like Arcana, Investigation, Insight, and Perception or through spells like *detect magic*.

If I'm concentrating on a spell and I cast another spell that requires concentration, when does my concentration on the first spell end? If you're concentrating on a spell, your concentration on it ends immediately when you start casting another spell that requires concentration.

SPELL ATTACKS

Is a touch range spell considered a melee attack for purposes of subduing foes rather than killing? Having a range of touch doesn't mean a spell is a melee attack. A spell tells you if it delivers such an attack.

Can spell attacks score critical hits? A spell attack can definitely score a critical hit. The rule on critical hits applies to attack rolls of any sort.

When casting a spell that affects multiple targets, such as *scorching ray* or *eldritch blast*, do I fire one ray or beam, determine the result, and fire again? Or do I have to choose all the targets before making any attack rolls? Even though the duration of each of these spells is instantaneous, you choose the targets and resolve the attacks consecutively, not all at once. If you want, you can declare all your targets before making any attacks, but you would still roll separately for each attack (and damage, if appropriate).

Can a spell with an attack roll be used as the attack in the Attack action or as part of the Extra Attack feature? The short answer is no.

As explained in the *Player's Handbook*, you can take one action on your turn in combat, in addition to moving. You choose your action from the options available to everyone—options such as Attack, Cast a Spell, and Dash—or you choose from among the special actions you've gained from a class, a feat, or another source.

If you want to cast a spell on your turn, you take the Cast a Spell action. Doing so means you're not taking the Attack action or any other action. It is true that a number

of spells, such as *fire bolt* and *ray of frost*, involve making an attack, but you can't make such an attack without first casting the spell that delivers it. In other words, just because something involves an attack doesn't mean the Attack action is being used.

By extension, the Extra Attack feature (given by several classes, including the fighter and paladin) doesn't let you cast extra attack spells. That feature specifically relies on the Attack action, not the Cast a Spell action or any other action.

In summary, to make a spell attack, you have to first cast a spell or use a feature that creates the spell's effect. A game feature, such as Extra Attack, that lets you make an attack doesn't let you cast a spell unless it says it does.

Can you use a melee spell attack to make an opportunity attack? You can't if the spell attack is created by casting a spell. When a creature triggers an opportunity attack from you, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against it. The opportunity attack doesn't suddenly give you the ability to cast a spell, such as *shocking grasp*.

Each spell has a casting time. A game feature, such as an opportunity attack, doesn't let you bypass that casting time, unless the feature says otherwise. The War Caster feat is an example of a feature that does let you bypass a 1-action casting time to cast a spell in place of making an opportunity attack.

A few monsters can make opportunity attacks with melee spell attacks. Here's how: certain monsters—including the banshee, the lich, and the specter—have a melee spell attack that isn't delivered by a spell. For example, the banshee's Corrupting Touch action is a melee spell attack but no spell is cast to make it. The banshee can, therefore, make opportunity attacks with Corrupting Touch.

Some spells (like *eldritch blast*) target a creature. Some others (like *fire bolt*) target objects too. Does this mean that I can't attack the door with *eldritch blast*? The target specifications (creature, object, or something else) in spells are intentional.

Does a melee spell attack count as a melee attack for Touch of Death? A melee spell attack is, indeed, a melee attack and can qualify for the Death cleric's Touch of Death feature.

SPELL LEVEL

What level is a spell if you cast it without a spell slot?

Such a spell is cast at its lowest possible level, which is the level that appears near the top of its description. Unless you have a special ability that says otherwise, the only way to increase the level of a spell is to expend a higher-level spell slot when you cast it.

Here are some examples:

- The warlock's Chains of Carceri feature lets a warlock cast *hold monster* without using a spell slot. That casting of *hold monster* is, therefore, 5th level, which is the lowest possible level for that spell.
- The warlock's Thief of Five Fates feature lets a warlock cast *bane* using a spell slot, which means the spell is 1st

level or higher, depending on the slot that the warlock expends to cast it.

- The monk's Disciple of the Elements feature lets the monk spend ki points, rather than a spell slot, to increase the level of a spell.

This rule is true for player characters and monsters alike, which is why the innate spellcasters in the *Monster Manual* must cast an innate spell at its lowest possible level.

CASTING TIME

Is there a limit on the number of spells you can cast on your turn? There's no rule that says you can cast

only X number of spells on your turn, but there are some practical limits. The main limiting factor is your action. Most spells require an action to cast, and unless you use a feature like the fighter's Action Surge, you have only one action on your turn.

If you cast a spell, such as *healing word*, with a bonus action, you can cast another spell with your action, but that other spell must be a cantrip. Keep in mind that this particular limit is specific to spells that use a bonus action. For instance, if you cast a second spell using Action Surge, you aren't limited to casting a cantrip with it.

Does the rule on casting a bonus action spell apply when you take a bonus action granted by a spell? The rule on casting a spell as a bonus action (see *PH*, 202) applies only on the turn you cast the spell. For example, *spiritual weapon* can be cast as a bonus action, and it lasts for 1 minute. On the turn you cast it, you can't cast another spell before or after it, unless that spell is a cantrip with a casting time of 1 action. Until *spiritual weapon* ends, it gives you the option of controlling its spectral weapon as a bonus action. That bonus action does not involve casting a spell, despite the fact that it's granted by a spell, so you can control the weapon and cast whatever spell you like on the same turn.

Can you cast a reaction spell on your turn? You sure can! Here's a common way for it to happen: Cornelius the wizard is casting *fireball* on his turn, and his foe casts *counterspell* on him. Cornelius also has *counterspell* prepared, so he uses his reaction to cast it and break his foe's *counterspell* before it can stop *fireball*.

Does casting a spell as a ritual require concentration if the spell doesn't normally require it? Concentration is required when casting any spell, including a ritual version, for longer than 1 action (see *PH*, 202). Once the casting is complete, the spell requires concentration only if its duration entry says it does.

COMPONENTS

Does a spell consume its material components? A spell doesn't consume its material components unless its description says it does. For example, the pearl required by the *identify* spell isn't consumed, whereas the diamond required by *raise dead* is used up when you cast the spell.

If a spell's material components are consumed, can a spellcasting focus still be used in place of the consumed component? No. A spellcasting focus can be used

in place of a material component only if that component has no cost noted in the spell's description and if that component isn't consumed.

What's the amount of interaction needed to use a spellcasting focus? Does it have to be included in the somatic component? If a spell has a material component, you need to handle that component when you cast the spell (*PH*, 203). The same rule applies if you're using a spellcasting focus as the material component.

If a spell has a somatic component, you can use the hand that performs the somatic component to also handle the material component. For example, a wizard who uses an orb as a spellcasting focus could hold a quarterstaff in one hand and the orb in the other, and he could cast *lightning bolt* by using the orb as the spell's material component and the orb hand to perform the spell's somatic component.

Another example: a cleric's holy symbol is emblazoned on her shield. She likes to wade into melee combat with a mace in one hand and a shield in the other. She uses the holy symbol as her spellcasting focus, so she needs to have the shield in hand when she casts a cleric spell that has a material component. If the spell, such as *aid*, also has a somatic component, she can perform that component with the shield hand and keep holding the mace in the other.

If the same cleric casts *cure wounds*, she needs to put the mace or the shield away, because that spell doesn't have a material component but does have a somatic component. She's going to need a free hand to make the spell's gestures. If she had the War Caster feat, she could ignore this restriction.

DURATION

If you're concentrating on a spell, do you need to maintain line of sight with the spell's target or the spell's effect? You don't need to be within line of sight or within range to maintain concentration on a spell, unless a spell's description or other game feature says otherwise.

If I have 10 temporary hit points and I take 30 damage from an attack while concentrating on a spell, what is the DC of the Constitution save to maintain my concentration? The DC is 15 in that case. When temporary hit points absorb damage for you, you're still taking damage, just not to your real hit points.

In contrast, a feature like the wizard's Arcane Ward can take damage for you, potentially eliminating the need to make a Constitution saving throw or, at least, lowering the DC of that save.

Can a spellcaster dismiss a spell after casting it? You can't normally dismiss a spell that you cast unless (a) its description says you can or (b) it requires concentration and you decide to end your concentration on it. Otherwise, a spell's magic is unleashed on the environment, and if you want to end it, you need to cast *dispel magic* on it.

SPECIFIC SPELLS

[NEW] Can I cast *animate dead* on the humanoid-shaped corpse of an undead creature such as a zombie or a ghast? When *animate dead* targets a corpse, the body must have belonged to a creature of the

humanoid creature type.

If the spell targets a pile of bones, there is no creature type restriction; the bones become a skeleton.

Does casting *animate objects* during a *time stop* spell end the *time stop*? No. Commanding the newly created creatures with your bonus action does end *time stop*, however.

Can you extend the duration of *armor of Agathys* by gaining more temporary hit points? The spell is meant to work only as long as you have the temporary hit points that the spell grants. When those temporary hit points are gone, the spell is done.

Keep in mind that temporary hit points aren't cumulative (see *PH*, 198). If you have temporary hit points and receive more of them, you don't add them together, unless a game feature says you can. You decide which temporary hit points to keep. As an example, let's say you're a warlock with the Dark One's Blessing feature, which gives you temporary hit points when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points. You currently have 2 temporary hit points remaining from *armor of Agathys*, you just slew a monster, and your Dark One's Blessing can now give you 4 temporary hit points. If you take those temporary hit points, they replace the ones from *armor of Agathys* and end that spell, so you might not want to take them and keep the spell going instead, so as to continue benefiting from the cold damage it delivers.

How does *barkskin* work with shields, cover, and other modifiers to AC? *Barkskin* specifies that your AC can't be lower than 16 while you are affected by the spell. This means you effectively ignore any modifiers to your AC—including your Dexterity modifier, your armor, a shield, and cover—unless your AC is higher than 16. For example, if your AC is normally 14, it's 16 while *barkskin* is on you. If your AC is normally 15 and you have half cover, your AC is 17; *barkskin* isn't relevant in this case.

Does the *blinding smite* spell deal extra radiant damage on every successful attack I make while I'm concentrating on the spell, or only on the first one? "The next time" in the spell description indicates that the extra damage applies only once, the first time you hit a creature after you finish casting the spell.

Is the *chill touch* spell intended as a way of foiling any creature that has *Regeneration*? *Chill touch* does, indeed, stop the target it hits from regaining hit points until the spell ends. This is true even if the target takes none of the necrotic damage, whether because of immunity or some other reason.

Using 5-foot squares, does *cloud of daggers* affect a single square? *Cloud of daggers* (5 ft. cube) can affect more than one square on a grid, unless the DM says effects snap to the grid. There are many ways to position that cube.

Can a creature under the effect of *compelled duel* teleport more than 30 feet away from the caster? No. You can't move farther than 30 feet away from the caster of *compelled duel* by any means, including teleportation.

Is the damage dealt by a beast from *conjure animals* considered magical? The stat block of a conjured creature determines the nature of the creature's damage, unless the spell says otherwise.

Can *conjure animals* summon a swarm? No. *Conjure animals* summons individual creatures, and swarms are groups of creatures.

When you cast a spell like *conjure woodland beings*, does the spellcaster or the DM choose the creatures that are conjured? A number of spells in the game let you summon creatures. *Conjure animals*, *conjure celestial*, *conjure minor elementals*, and *conjure woodland beings* are just a few examples.

Some spells of this sort specify that the spellcaster chooses the creature conjured. For example, *find familiar* gives the caster a list of animals to choose from.

Other spells of this sort let the spellcaster choose from among several broad options. For example, *conjure minor elementals* offers four options. Here are the first two:

- One elemental of challenge rating 2 or lower
- Two elementals of challenge rating 1 or lower

The design intent for options like these is that the spellcaster chooses one of them, and then the DM decides what creatures appear that fit the chosen option. For example, if you pick the second option, the DM chooses the two elementals that have a challenge rating of 1 or lower.

A spellcaster can certainly express a preference for what creatures shows up, but it's up to the DM to determine if they do. The DM will often choose creatures that are appropriate for the campaign and that will be fun to introduce in a scene.

Does *counterspell* target the caster or the spell you're trying to counter? *Counterspell* targets the other spellcaster.

If a wizard with *Inured to Undeath* spends Hit Dice to raise the hit point maximum of a homunculus created by the *create homunculus* spell, does it still decrease the wizard's hit point maximum? Spending the Hit Dice affects the homunculus as described in the spell, but the wizard's hit point maximum isn't decreased.

Can you cast *darkness* with a higher-level slot to end a spell of 3rd level or higher that creates light? No. The *darkness* spell can dispel only a light-creating spell of 2nd level or lower, no matter what spell slot is used for *darkness*. Similarly, the *daylight* spell can dispel only a darkness-creating spell of 3rd level or lower, regardless of the spell slot used.

If the damage from *disintegrate* reduces a half-orc to 0 hit points, can Relentless Endurance prevent the orc from turning to ash? Yes. The *disintegrate* spell turns you into dust only if the spell's damage leaves you with 0 hit points. If you're a half-orc, Relentless Endurance can turn the 0 into a 1 before the spell can disintegrate you.

What happens if a druid using Wild Shape is reduced to 0 hit points by *disintegrate*? Does the druid simply leave beast form? The druid leaves beast form. As usual,

any leftover damage then applies to the druid's normal hit points. If the leftover damage leaves the druid with 0 hit points, the druid is disintegrated.

Can you use *dispel magic* to dispel a magical effect like a vampire's Charm ability or a druid's Wild Shape? *Dispel magic* has a particular purpose: to break other spells. It has no effect on a vampire's Charm ability or any other magical effect that isn't a spell. It also does nothing to the properties of a magic item. It can, however, end a spell cast from a magic item or from another source. Spells—they're what *dispel magic* is about. For example, if you cast *dispel magic* on a *staff of power*, the spell fails to disrupt the staff's magical properties, but if the staff's wielder casts *hold monster* from the staff, *dispel magic* can end that spell if cast on the target of *hold monster*.

There are abilities and other spells that can end or suspend magical effects that aren't spells. For example, the *greater restoration* spell can end a charm effect of any sort on a target (such as a vampire's Charm or a dryad's Fey Charm), and a paladin's Aura of Devotion can prevent or suspend such an effect.

Three of the most versatile spells for ending certain magical effects are *lesser restoration*, *greater restoration*, and *remove curse*.

Can you use *dispel magic* on the creations of a spell like *animate dead* or affect those creations with *antimagic field*? Whenever you wonder whether a spell's effects can be dispelled or suspended, you need to answer one question: is the spell's duration instantaneous? If the answer is yes, there is nothing to dispel or suspend. Here's why: the effects of an instantaneous spell are brought into being by magic, but the effects aren't sustained by magic (see *PH*, 203). The magic flares for a split second and then vanishes. For example, the instantaneous spell *animate dead* harnesses magical energy to turn a corpse or a pile of bones into an undead creature. That necromantic magic is present for an instant and is then gone. The resulting undead now exists without the magic's help. Casting *dispel magic* on the creature can't end its mockery of life, and the undead can wander into an *antimagic field* with no adverse effect.

Another example: *cure wounds* instantaneously restores hit points to a creature. Because the spell's duration is instantaneous, the restoration can't be later dispelled. And you don't suddenly lose hit points if you step into an *antimagic field*!

In contrast, a spell like *conjure woodland beings* has a non-instantaneous duration, which means its creations can be ended by *dispel magic* and they temporarily disappear within an *antimagic field*.

Can you ready *dispel magic* to stop another spell from taking effect? The easiest way to stop a spell is to cast *counterspell* on its caster while it's being cast. If successful, *counterspell* interrupts the other spell's casting, and that spell fails to take effect. *Counterspell* works against any spell, regardless of a spell's casting time or duration.

With the Ready action, *dispel magic* can be cast in response to another spell being cast, yet *dispel magic* can't

substitute for *counterspell*. The main reason is that *dispel magic* removes a spell that is already on a target, whether that target is a creature, an object, or some other phenomenon. *Dispel magic* can't dispel something in advance. If a spell isn't already present on a target, *dispel magic* does nothing to that target. The best that a readied *dispel magic* can do is dispel a spell immediately after the spell has been cast to prevent it from having any effect after the action used to cast it. For example, on your turn you could say something like this: "I ready *dispel magic*, and if the high priest casts a spell on anyone, I cast *dispel magic* on the target if the spell takes hold." If the high priest then cast *hold person* on your companion who fails the save against it, you could unleash your readied *dispel magic* and end *hold person*.

Can *dispel magic* end *globe of invulnerability*? Yes, *dispel magic* can dispel the barrier created by *globe of invulnerability*, but not any magical effects that are active inside the barrier.

If *dispel magic* targets the magical effect from *bless* cast by a cleric, does it remove the effect on all the targets? *Dispel magic* ends a spell on one target. It doesn't end the same spell on other targets.

Can the familiar you conjure with the *find familiar* spell use the Help action to grant you advantage on your attack roll? A familiar can't attack, but it can take non-attack actions, including Help. As the text of the Help action indicates (*PH*, 192), the action doesn't require you to be able to attack; you simply need to be able to provide some sort of distraction.

Does the familiar of *find familiar* count as an ally for the purposes of Sneak Attack? A familiar is an allied creature. Its proximity to a target can allow you to use the Sneak Attack feature or any other feature that requires the presence of an ally.

When you dismiss the familiar you conjure with the *find familiar* spell to its pocket dimension, can it take any objects it's wearing or carrying with it? No, the intent of *find familiar* is that any objects are left behind when the familiar vanishes. This intent will be reflected in future printings of the *Player's Handbook*.

Can a spell such as *fireball* go past its 20-foot radius if the point of origin is set in an enclosed space that's less than 40 feet across? The fire of the *fireball* spell can spread around corners, but it's limited by the spell's 20-foot radius. It doesn't extend farther than 20 feet from the point of origin no matter where it is cast.

If I'm a cleric/druid with the Disciple of Life feature, does the *goodberry* spell benefit from the feature? Yes. The Disciple of Life feature would make each berry restore 4 hit points, instead of 1, assuming you cast *goodberry* with a 1st-level spell slot.

Can you use *green-flame blade* and *booming blade* with Extra Attack, opportunity attacks, Sneak Attack, and other weapon attack options? Introduced in the *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*, the *green-flame blade* and

booming blade spells pose a number of questions, because they each do something unusual: require you to make a melee attack with a weapon as part of the spell's casting.

First, each of these spells involves a normal melee weapon attack, not a spell attack, so you use whatever ability modifier you normally use with the weapon. (A spell tells you if it includes a spell attack, and neither of these spells do.) For example, if you use a longsword with *green-flame blade*, you use your Strength modifier for the weapon's attack and damage rolls.

Second, neither *green-flame blade* nor *booming blade* works with Extra Attack or any other feature that requires the Attack action. Like other spells, these cantrips require the Cast a Spell action, not the Attack action, and they can't be used to make an opportunity attack, unless a special feature allows you to do so.

Third, these weapon attacks work with Sneak Attack if they fulfill the normal requirements for that feature. For example, if you have the Sneak Attack feature and cast *green-flame blade* with a finesse weapon, you can deal Sneak Attack damage to the target of the weapon attack if you have advantage on the attack roll and hit.

When a creature successfully saves against *guardian of faith* and takes 10 radiant damage, how much damage does that count against the total amount of damage the spell can deal? Is it 20 because that's how much it dealt or 10 because that's how much the target took? It dealt 10 damage to the creature, so 10 is subtracted from the total.

For the spell *hail of thorns*, does it last for the initial attack or as long as you maintain concentration? *Hail of thorns* lasts until you hit a creature with a ranged weapon attack or your concentration ends, whichever comes first.

Can the extra action granted by *haste* be used to activate a magic item? No. Activating a magic item isn't a function of the Use an Object action (*DMG*, 141).

Does the *heroes' feast* spell grant immunity to poison damage or just the poison condition? The *heroes' feast* spell grants immunity to poison in any form—damage and the condition.

Do the temporary hit points from *heroism* accumulate each round? Temporary hit points aren't cumulative. The spell would tell you if you were meant to add together the temporary hit points it provides. At the start of each of your turns, the spell, effectively, refreshes the number of temporary hit points you have from it; if you lost some or all of the temporary hit points, the spell gives them back to you.

If the *heroism* spell is cast on a character that is already frightened, does it remove the frightened effect? The *heroism* spell would suppress a frightening effect that was already on its target. When the spell ends, the target's immunity goes away and the frightening effect resumes if it has not expired or been removed.

Does the extra damage from *hex* only apply if there is an attack roll? The extra damage in the *hex* spell requires an attack that hits.

Since resting identifies magic items, and the *identify* spell doesn't spot curses, what is the role of the *identify* spell? The most important factors are time and convenience. During a short rest, which takes at least 1 hour, a character who meets the qualifications can determine the properties of one magic item (see “Identifying a Magic Item” on page 136 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). In contrast, casting the *identify* spell takes only 1 minute (or 11 minutes if it is cast as a ritual) and can be done when a quick determination is needed.

What happens when a *jump* spell gives a creature a jump distance greater than its walking speed? Your jump is limited by how far you can move; each foot jumped uses a foot of movement. You can take the Dash action if you want to extend how far you can move on your turn.

For example, if you have a Strength score of 15, you can normally leap 15 feet when you make a long jump if you move at least 10 feet immediately beforehand. If the *jump* spell is cast on you, that potential jump distance is tripled. That's a jump of 45 feet! If your speed is 30 feet, you can use only 30 feet of that jump distance on your turn, unless you take the Dash action, which allows you to leap the full 45 feet.

Can you use a shield with *mage armor*? *Mage armor* works with a shield. Shields are grouped with armor in the equipment rules in the *Player's Handbook*, but various game features distinguish between the armor you wear and a shield you wield. Take a look at the monk's Unarmored Defense feature and compare it to the barbarian's version. In the monk's version, you must both forgo wearing armor and forgo wielding a shield if you want to benefit from the feature, whereas a barbarian must only forgo wearing armor.

Does Unarmored Defense work with a spell like *mage armor*? Unarmored Defense doesn't work with *mage armor*. You might be asking yourself, “Why don't they work together? *Mage armor* specifies that it works on a creature who isn't wearing armor.” It's true that the target of *mage armor* must be unarmored, but *mage armor* gives you a new way to calculate your AC (13 + your Dexterity modifier) and is therefore incompatible with Unarmored Defense or any other feature that provides an AC calculation.

I find it confusing that the *mage armor* spell is named that when it doesn't count as armor. Some spells and class features have figurative, not literal, names. The text of the spell or class feature explains what it does. In this case, *mage armor* (PH, 256) surrounds the target with “protective magical force”; the spell doesn't provide armor.

Can an object created with *minor illusion* move? For example, a wall sliding down a corridor? An illusory object created by *minor illusion* doesn't move. Compare to spells like *major image* and *mislead*, which talk about moving.

Could *minor illusion* create a fog cloud? If so, would shooting an arrow through it cancel the illusion? An illusory object made by *minor illusion* is meant to be like a stool or a rock, not an atmospheric effect.

***Misty step* doesn't say the caster can bring worn or carried equipment with them. Are they intended to leave everything, including their clothes, behind?** No, the caster's worn and carried equipment are intended to go with them.

Some teleportation effects do specify that you teleport with your gear; such specification is an example of a rule being needlessly fastidious, since no teleportation effect in the game assumes that you teleport without your clothes, just as the general movement rules don't assume that you drop everything when you walk.

Does *moonbeam* deal damage when you cast it? What about when its effect moves onto a creature? The answer to both questions is no. Here's some elaboration on that answer.

Some spells and other game features create an area of effect that does something when a creature enters that area for the first time on a turn or when a creature starts its turn in that area. On the turn when you cast such a spell, you're primarily setting up hurt for your foes on later turns. *Moonbeam*, for example, creates a beam of light that can damage a creature who enters the beam or who starts its turn in the beam.

Here are some spells with the same timing as *moonbeam* for their areas of effect:

blade barrier
cloudkill
cloud of daggers
Evard's black tentacles
forbiddance
moonbeam
sleet storm
spirit guardians

Reading the description of any of those spells, you might wonder whether a creature is considered to be entering the spell's area of effect if the area is created on the creature's space. And if the area of effect can be moved—as the beam of *moonbeam* can—does moving it into a creature's space count as the creature entering the area? Our design intent for such spells is this: a creature enters the area of effect when the creature passes into it. Creating the area of effect on the creature or moving it onto the creature doesn't count. If the creature is still in the area at the start of its turn, it is subjected to the area's effect.

Entering such an area of effect needn't be voluntary, unless a spell says otherwise. You can, therefore, hurl a creature into the area with a spell like *thunderwave*. We consider that clever play, not an imbalance, so hurl away! Keep in mind, however, that a creature is subjected to such an area of effect only the first time it enters the area on a turn. You can't move a creature in and out of it to damage it over and over again on the same turn.

In summary, a spell like *moonbeam* affects a creature when the creature passes into the spell's area of effect and when the creature starts its turn there. You're essentially creating a hazard on the battlefield.

What happens to objects brought inside and left inside Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion when the spell ends? The intent is that the objects are ejected from the mansion when the spell ends and appear in unoccupied spaces closest to where the door was. This intent will be reflected in future printings of the *Player's Handbook*.

Does planar binding summon the creature to be bound, or is that done separately? *Planar binding* doesn't summon a creature. It attempts to bind a creature that is within the spell's range.

Can you concentrate on a spell while transformed by polymorph? You can't cast spells while you're transformed by *polymorph*, but nothing in the spell prevents you from concentrating on a spell that you previously cast before being transformed.

Does a willing creature under the effects of polymorph have to take the mental stats of the new form? Yes. Unless a spell tells you otherwise, its effect is no different for a willing creature than it is for an unwilling one.

If a creature under the effects of polymorph takes enough fire damage to revert to its true form and that form has fire resistance, does the true form take the full remaining damage or only half due to resistance? When the creature reverts to its true form, any leftover damage is subject to that form's damage resistances, if any.

Can a creature under the effects of polymorph have other spell effects on them, or are those game statistics also replaced by the those of the beast form? *Polymorph* replaces only the target's character sheet or stat block with the stat block of the chosen form. Other effects, such as other spells, still exist.

What happens if I'm polymorphed or Wild Shaped into a creature with fewer than 100 hit points and then I'm targeted by power word kill? You die.

What kinds of things count as "nonmagical trinkets" for prestidigitation? *Prestidigitation* can create a little bauble, the nature of which is up to the spellcaster and the DM. See the Trinkets table in the *Player's Handbook* (p. 160–61) for examples.

If you grapple or shove an enemy creature, does that end a sanctuary spell cast on you? If you use the grapple or shove option in the combat rules (*PH*, 195), the *sanctuary* spell does end on you, since you have made an attack.

Can I hand a shadow blade to another PC? It only says the blade dissipates as I throw or drop it. No. The intent is the blade vanishes when you let go of it (that's one of the meanings of the word "drop").

If I cast shillelagh on my quarterstaff and have the Polearm Master feat, does the bonus attack use a d4 or a d8 for damage? The benefit from Polearm Master

applies to the opposite end of the weapon and always uses a d4 for damage rather than the weapon's normal damage die. This is true for a quarterstaff enhanced with *shillelagh* just as it is for a normal one.

If a spellcaster is affected by slow and takes two turns to finish casting a spell, what happens if their target has moved out of range or out of sight? You choose the targets of a spell when you complete casting a spell, not when you start.

The stinking cloud spell says that a creature wastes its action on a failed save. So can it still use a move or a bonus action or a reaction? Correct. The gas doesn't immobilize a creature or prevent it from acting altogether, but the effect of the spell does limit what it can accomplish while the cloud lingers.

Do the effects of storm of vengeance stack? Or do the effects change each turn? In the spell *storm of vengeance*, each new effect replaces the effect of the previous round.

Is the sentence of suggestion in the suggestion spell the verbal component, or is the verbal component separate? Verbal components are mystic words (*PH*, 203), not normal speech. The spell's suggestion is an intelligible utterance that is separate from the verbal component. The *command* spell is the simplest example of this principle. The utterance of the verbal component is separate from, and precedes, any verbal utterance that would bring about the spell's effect.

The wording in Tasha's hideous laughter implies that the incapacitated effect applies only if the target is made prone. Is this right? Failing a save against *Tasha's hideous laughter* means you're incapacitated even if you can't fall prone.

If you are affecting a target with telekinesis and an ally put you inside Otiluke's resilient sphere, can you continue affecting the target or other targets with the existing telekinesis spell? You can maintain your telekinetic grip on a target you were already affecting, but you can't affect a new target. The sphere provides total cover that stops you from targeting anything outside it.

If two creatures are under the effect of tether essence and they are both damaged by an area effect such as a dragon's breath, do they each take the damage twice? Yes.

Can I use unseen servant to act as an ally when using a class feature like Sneak Attack? *Unseen servant* creates "an invisible, mindless, shapeless force" (*PH*, 284). In combat, it doesn't act as a creature, an enemy, or an ally.

Whenever you cast wish, do you always have a 33 percent chance of never casting it again? If you cast *wish* to duplicate a spell of level 0–8, there are no detrimental effects. However, if you do anything other than duplicate a spell of level 0–8, you suffer the stress described in the final paragraph of the spell. As soon as that stress affects you, there is a 33 percent chance that you are unable to cast *wish* again.

MONSTERS

Is natural armor considered light armor? No. Natural armor doesn't fit into the categories of light, medium, and heavy armor, and when you have it, it isn't considered to be an armor you're wearing.

Does natural armor cap a creature's Dexterity bonus? Natural armor doesn't limit a creature's Dexterity bonus.

A monster is immune to damage from nonmagical bludgeoning weapons. Does it still take damage from falling? Yes, that monster is still going to feel the hurt of a fall, because a fall is not a weapon.

What actions can monsters use to make opportunity attacks? Are Multiattack and breath weapon actions allowed? A monster follows the normal opportunity attack rules (*PH*, 195), which specify that an attack of opportunity is one melee attack. That means a monster must choose a single melee attack to make, either an attack in its stat block or a generic attack, like an unarmed strike. Multiattack doesn't qualify, not only because it's more than one attack, but also because the rule on Multiattack (*MM*, 11) states that this action can't be used for opportunity attacks. An action, such as a breath weapon, that doesn't include an attack roll is also not eligible.

The bite attacks of ghouls and ghosts don't appear to have proficiency bonus added in. Intentional or mistake? Intentional; it's a ghoul/ghost thing. They're exceptionally bad at biting, compared to their claw attacks. Monsters sometimes have stat quirks like that.

The *Monster Manual* says gnolls speak Gnoll, but the *Player's Handbook* doesn't mention that language. What is correct? The *Player's Handbook* language tables don't list every language in the D&D multiverse. The *Monster Manual* mentions other languages, including Gnoll, Modron, Sahuagin, and Slaad.

Does a monster with at-will spellcasting ability mean it can cast a spell as an action or as a bonus action? If a monster has the ability to cast a spell at will, that spell is cast using its normal casting time.

If a monster makes a melee attack that uses its Dexterity modifier, is it considered to have used a finesse weapon? A weapon doesn't have the finesse property unless its description says so, and using Dexterity for an attack doesn't confer the finesse property. If a weapon does have that property, you can use Strength or Dexterity with it.

The *Monster Manual* notes that a mezzoloth exhales toxic fumes that can choke and kill whole groups of creatures. However, its *cloudkill* is listed under Innate Spellcasting. Because of that, would a paladin's Aura of Warding resist it? Yes, because *cloudkill* is a spell, Aura of Warding would be able to grant you and friendly creatures within 10 feet of you resistance to it.

Is the breath weapon of a dragon magical? If you cast *antimagic field*, don *armor of invulnerability*, or use another feature of the game that protects against magical

or nonmagical effects, you might ask yourself, "Will this protect me against a dragon's breath?" The breath weapon of a typical dragon isn't considered magical, so *antimagic field* won't help you but *armor of invulnerability* will.

You might be thinking, "Dragons seem pretty magical to me." And yes, they are extraordinary! Their description even says they're magical. But our game makes a distinction between two types of magic:

- the background magic that is part of the D&D multiverse's physics and the physiology of many D&D creatures
- the concentrated magical energy that is contained in a magic item or channeled to create a spell or other focused magical effect

In D&D, the first type of magic is part of nature. It is no more dispellable than the wind. A monster like a dragon exists because of that magic-enhanced nature. The second type of magic is what the rules are concerned about. When a rule refers to something being magical, it's referring to that second type. Determining whether a game feature is magical is straightforward. Ask yourself these questions about the feature:

- Is it a magic item?
- Is it a spell? Or does it let you create the effects of a spell that's mentioned in its description?
- Is it a spell attack?
- Is it fueled by the use of spell slots?
- Does its description say it's magical?

If your answer to any of those questions is yes, the feature is magical.

Let's look at a white dragon's Cold Breath and ask ourselves those questions. First, Cold Breath isn't a magic item. Second, its description mentions no spell. Third, it's not a spell attack. Fourth, the word "magical" appears nowhere in its description. Our conclusion: Cold Breath is not considered a magical game effect, even though we know that dragons are amazing, supernatural beings.

Does the movement from a dragon's Wing Attack legendary action draw attacks of opportunity if it moves out of reach? Yes. Wing Attack does not protect the dragon from opportunity attacks.

Does a creature with Magic Resistance have advantage on saving throws against Channel Divinity abilities, such as Turn the Faithless? Channel Divinity creates magical effects (as stated in both the cleric and the paladin). Magic Resistance applies.

Do air, fire, and water elementals suffer any penalties for fighting or using skills while they are squeezing into a space that's 5 feet wide or less? An air/fire/water elemental ignores the movement part of the squeezing rule (*PH*, 192) in a 1+ inch space, as a result of its special trait, Air Form, Fire Form, or Water Form.

Can an earth elemental grapple with a creature and then pull it underground and leave it there to die? No. An earth elemental's Earth Glide is meant to apply to itself

only. The elemental doesn't take other creatures with it when it moves in this way.

Does the lich's Disrupt Life ability affect animated objects and other constructs? The ability targets creatures that aren't undead, so yes, it does affect constructs (as well as all other kinds of creatures).

If a shadow rolls a critical hit, does it reduce the target's Strength by 2d4, as well dealing the extra necrotic damage? No. A critical hit lets you roll damage dice twice. An effect that deals damage is one that reduces the target's hit points. The shadow's Strength reduction isn't damage, because it has no effect on the target's hit points.

Since game features of the same name don't stack, does that mean a target can't be affected by a shadow's Strength Drain more than once between rests? The intended function of Strength Drain is that it stacks with itself, as signaled by the fact that you die if your Strength is reduced to 0 by it.

Is a vampire affected by hold person or calm emotions? Many spells affect not just any creatures, but only certain types, as specified in the spell. *Hold person* and *calm emotions* work only on humanoids, and a vampire is not a humanoid.

Is there a limit to the number of creatures a vampire can charm at once? No, there is no limit on the number of creatures a vampire can have charmed at once. A vampire can target a different humanoid each time it uses its Charm action, potentially causing an entire group of enemies to become charmed if their saving throws aren't successful.

How does a monster's Leadership ability work? A creature turns on Leadership as an action. Until the benefit ends, the creature can grant a die whenever a visible ally in range makes an attack roll or a saving throw.

Does a gauth's Devour Magic eye ray end a creature's attunement to an attuned magic item the ray affects? No.

Can a creature that burrows grapple a target and drag them into the ground by burrowing? No. A burrowing creature can drag another creature with them only if they have the ability to leave a tunnel. For example, a purple worm has the Tunneler trait, so it can drag a grappled creature into a tunnel it creates when burrowing. Conversely, an earth elemental can't drag a creature into the ground with it.

Can a hydra use Reactive Heads to make multiple opportunity attacks against one creature at the same time when it provokes? Yes. For that reason, we recommend taking the Disengage action when you're going to move away from a hydra.

MAGIC ITEMS

Can potions be administered to unconscious characters as an action? Yes, you can administer a potion to someone else as an action (*DMG*, 139).

If a potion doesn't duplicate a spell, does it require concentration? A potion's effect requires concentration only if its description says so or if it duplicates a spell that requires concentration.

For the hat of disguise, how do I set the spell save DC for disguise self? Does the wearer have to be a caster? Use your spellcasting ability modifier to set the DC. If you don't have a spellcasting ability, use your proficiency bonus to set it (see the rule on page 141 of the *DMG*, under "Spells").

Which is correct in the Dungeon Master's Guide, the rule for scrolls or the rule for a spell scroll? They're both correct. The rule for scrolls (p. 139) is for scrolls in general, including a *scroll of protection*, and it allows you to try to activate a spell if you're literate. The rule for a *spell scroll* is specific to that type of scroll and introduces an additional requirement: the spell on the scroll must be on your class's spell list for you to read the scroll.

A *spell scroll* can be named in a variety of ways: *spell scroll*, *scroll of X* (where *X* is the name of a spell), or *spell scroll of X* (where *X*, again, is the name of a spell). No matter how its name appears, a *spell scroll* follows the same rule.

For you to meet a *spell scroll*'s requirement, the spell on the scroll needs to be on whatever spell list is used by your class. Here are two examples. If you're a cleric, the spell must be on the cleric spell list, and if you're a fighter with the Eldritch Knight archetype, the spell must be on the wizard spell list, because that is the spell list used by your class.

Do the AC bonuses from a ring of protection and bracers of defense stack? Yes. In general, bonuses stack, unless they're from the same spell (see "Combining Magical Effects" in the *Player's Handbook*, p. 205). You also can't benefit from more than one *ring of protection*, for instance, since you can't attune to more than one copy of an item at a time.

Do magic weapons give you a bonus to attack and damage rolls? A magic weapon gives you a bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls only if its description says it does. Every magic weapon can bypass resistances and immunities to damage from nonmagical attacks, but only certain magic weapons are more accurate and damaging than their nonmagical counterparts. For example, a *+1 longsword* and a *giant slayer* both give you a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls, whereas neither a *flame tongue* nor a *frost brand* provides such a bonus. All four weapons, however, can bypass an earth elemental's resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

In short, a bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls is considered a special property of a magic weapon, not something that all magic weapons provide automatically.

My fighter attacks a creature with a magical longbow and nonmagical arrows. Is the attack magical? The attacks made by a magical ranged weapon are magical, even

if the ammunition isn't magical. (This point was clarified in the errata for the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)

Are magic weapons with the thrown property (javelins and the like) assumed to return to their owner after being thrown? If a magic weapon returns to you after you throw it, its description says so, as in the *dwarven thrower* (DMG, 167).

If a rogue with the Assassinate feature uses a vorpal sword, isn't the surprise attack an instant kill? No. A *vorpal sword* requires you to roll a 20 on the attack roll to decapitate someone. A rogue with the Assassin archetype that attacks a surprised target using a *vorpal sword* scores an automatic critical hit if the attack roll is successful, but unless the attack roll was a 20, the target gets to keep its head.

Would an elf get a saving throw versus a philter of love as it's a charm? The description implies there is no save. There is no save against the *philter of love*. The love is just that strong.

Does the ring of the ram use spell attacks or weapon attacks? The text doesn't specify. The attack of the *ring of the ram* is a ranged spell attack. Future printings of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* will reflect that intent.

When using a rope of entanglement, do I keep holding one end in my hand, or does the entire rope wrap around the target? You are still holding the rope while the other end entangles the target.

Can a sphere of annihilation enter a Leomund's tiny hut? Yes. The sphere destroys the dome.

Can you gain the magical bonus of a +2 shield if you are holding the shield without taking an action to don it?

Yes, but only the magical +2, which you gain while holding the shield. In contrast, you gain the shield's nonmagical AC bonus only if you use your action to don the shield as normal (see "Getting Into and Out of Armor" in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*).

If a character hits a monk with a dwarven thrower and the monk uses Deflect Missiles, does the hammer return to the attacker first, or can the monk catch it? The monk can catch it.

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Make Your Monsters Scarier

Adam Lee highlights the softer side of scary as he promotes the storytelling qualities of a big (not so) bad.

It's that time of year, mis amigos. All Hallows' Eve, Día de Muertos. You can see it in the trees and feel it in the air. The dead start getting a bit restless around this time. Strange lights bob and flicker in the woods. The moon gets fatter. All that good stuff.



(Select to view)

It's also the time when Dungeon Masters start to weave their tales of the macabre, freaking out their players by pulling them into the deep waters of uncertainty and dread, then watching with glee as they struggle to get back to the shores of sanity. But maybe you're not one of those DMs. Perhaps you're the kind of DM who wants to give your players a gentler experience, a friendly ghost story on a cool autumn evening, an adventure that's as enjoyable as pumpkin pie with whipped cream.

Or perhaps now that we're in the frozen wasteland of Icewind Dale, you might set all of your spine-chilling adventures in a cold, bleak wilderness or in a snow-covered mansion to add an extra layer of shivers to your story. Whatever your particular taste, *Dungeons & Dragons* and the *Monster Manual* can accommodate your needs.

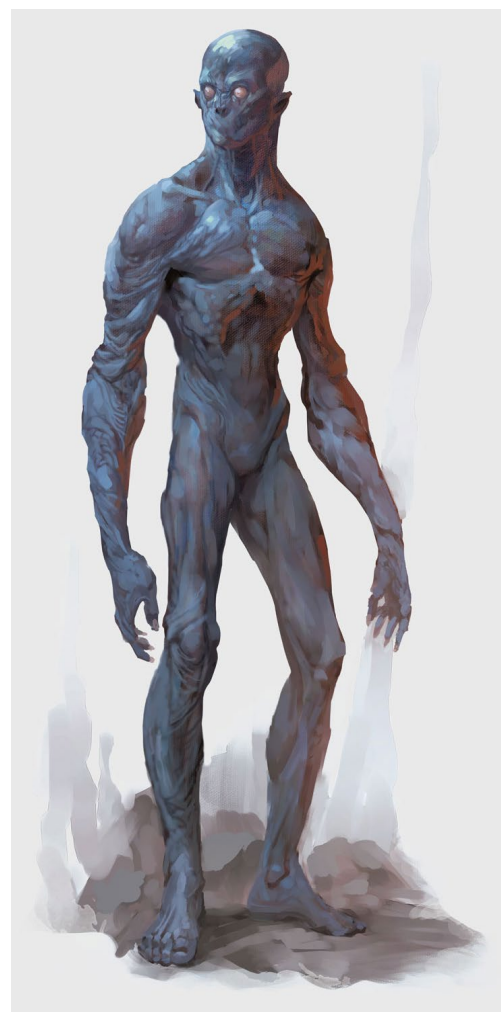
To Redeem or Not to Redeem?

One way of looking at a monster is that it's just a bag of hit points that the characters must bash on so that they can get the treasure. While this can be fun at first, as a storyteller, I've found that a monster can be so much more than a mere means to an end. Each monster can be a story that draws the players into the weave of the narrative and makes them commit to finishing the quest, whether that means defeating the monster or solving its mystery. Not every monster has to be a combat situation, and it's my experience that having a monster which is redeemable is far more interesting than having one that isn't because it gives the players a choice. When the players have to engage their brains and hearts in making choices, they become invested in their characters and the story.

In the *Monster Manual*, many monsters are written as being evil, but feel free to overwrite that with your own story. A monster's alignment can be changed to allow for it to be relatable, which pulls at the player's sympathies—imagine a doppelganger who isn't evil and has fallen in love with a form that isn't its own and is trying to live its life as another person, causing all kinds of trouble.

However, there are times when the story demands a really wicked monster. Sometimes, nothing feels better for a player than to have their character hack the head off of

a truly evil adversary. We can't always be like Luke, seeing the good and saving Darth Vader, sometimes what we want is to punch that sickening smirk off the face of Palpatine.



(Select to view)

Make the Monster Yours

When choosing a monster to build a story around, take the seed ideas in the monster's description and toss out any prescriptive stuff that says the monster has to be a certain way. You want to keep the spirit of the monster's law, while being free to disregard the letter of the monster's law. D&D is your story and so are the monsters in your *Monster Manual*.

All of the following examples can



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be quick one-shots to play in an evening, or they can be expanded into a whole campaign. How long you want to extend the story is up to you. I'm hoping to provide solid examples of re-casting

monsters to make them more conducive to roleplaying and non-combative storytelling, and show an example of how to tweak and re-purpose stat blocks to make new monsters from your imagination.

Banshee

The pale woman knelt by the dark water's edge, hunched in the gloom with her face in her hands. Her white hair hung straight as wet willow vines to mix with the mud of the shore. Her form glistened in what little moonlight shone through the fog and her tattered, filthy gown was soaked and stained. She was unnaturally still, and Rasmus would have thought her a statue or corpse if it wasn't for the low, muffled moan that came from behind her gaunt, claw-like hands.

"Are you sure about this?" Rasmus whispered to Shen, who clung to his cloak. The eerie presence made him wonder if his sword would even work on such a creature. Nevertheless, he drew out his blade.

“She’s been cursed. We have to help her,” Sheni replied from behind the cloak.

Rasmus wasn’t the best at starting conversations, but the ghostly figure spared him the trouble. Its voice was hollow, tortured, and sent a chill down Rasmus’ spine.

“Do not look at my face,” it hissed, “as all who gaze upon me are doomed.”



(Select to view)

Banshees are traditionally murderous spirits that lure adventurers to a swampy, drowny death. As written, they were once vain and obsessed elves who used their great beauty to control and dominate others. Eventually, this tact led to their corruption and demise, and now they haunt the swamps, enraged at their now hideous features, hoarding anything that they deem beautiful.

If you go into the story behind the making of the monster and toss out a few things, you could have a banshee that isn’t entirely malicious. For example, you could have an elf that was once kind who was cursed to be a banshee.

Every now and then, the good person she once was glimmers through. She needs something returned to her so that the curse can be lifted and her spirit allowed to rest. She weeps in the swamps until the characters come to her aid or someone who knew her in life beseeches the adventurers to help their cursed friend.

The banshee could still be very dangerous—maybe she slips in and out of her cursed state—but through roleplaying the PCs could figure out that she’s the victim of this horrible banshee curse, and they

could possibly be the ones to break it. By communicating with her, they could realize that she was once an elven queen whose heart was stolen by an evil wizard. This caused her to become cold and cruel, using her beauty to manipulate those around her. Unable to recover her heart, she fell into corruption and became a banshee.

Somehow, she is able to hang onto a shred of her former self and can now only watch in revulsion as her cursed nature takes over her consciousness and lures mortals to a watery grave, an act that she finds too painful to bear. At first, she begs the adventurers for death, but after talking to her, the characters hear her tale of woe and find that there is one way to break her curse—they must find and return her heart to her. But it won't be easy, as it is kept under lock and key within the evil wizard's dungeon of dread.

Why is the evil wizard collecting elven hearts? Well, DM, that's up for you to decide!

Revenant

Four adventurers sat around the thick oaken table as the old codger wove a sorrowful tale of love, hatred, and murder most foul. The halfling, Etty, having long ago lost interest, played with the tavern cat while Lila, Eddard, and Yokum all sat transfixed by the old man's story. It was all true. The mysterious letter, the dreams Lila had been having, it all pointed to the story they were hearing. The old man was telling them a tale about an aristocratic family, the Dunwells, that had become demon-worshipping fiends and were plotting to turn the town of Merrydale into a foothold for the forces of the Abyss.

"But there was one poor soul who stood up to the Dunwells," the codger wheezed, holding up a gnarled finger. "The youngest of the Happerdeans, a local family that has lived in Merrydale for ages. Now everyone knew that this young Happerdean and one of the Dunwells were in love, and that wasn't something that old Rizmuth

Dunwell wanted to happen.” The codger took a breath and his eyes turned all misty-like. “It is rumored that poor young Happerdean was murdered with a demon knife and buried on the moors. But some claim to have heard him weeping in the mists and calling for his lost love.”

Eddard whispered to Lila whose face looked pale and shaken. “Could be a revenant.” Eddard nodded. “I’ve read about such creatures at the academy. If this Happerdean is so cursed, then we may not have long. A revenant often has only a limited time to complete their revenge before they are pulled into the void. Hey, are you okay?” But Lila didn’t hear Eddard. Her hand had come to rest on the mysterious letter she had tucked into her knapsack. The truth of its message now dawning on her mind like a terrible dragon rising from a crack in the earth.

“We best act fast,” she whispered.

Revenge is a great central theme for an adventure and the revenant has revenge built into its DNA. The revenant is a CR 5 creature, so it’s tough for a party of newbies but more suitable for a group of seasoned adventurers. In most stories, a revenant acts like a Terminator robot that relentlessly pursues its victim (whether a PC or NPC) until it achieves its vengeance or is defeated. Often, the revenant is locked in a quest for vengeance with an NPC that the characters must protect.



(Select to view)

A DM can begin to stray from this common tale by playing with the NPC’s personality. While it’s natural to make the revenant’s prey

very likeable (it makes the players care and makes them committed to your story) it's a fun twist to make your NPC a despicable cad. If the characters are promised a hefty reward to protect what appears to be a kindly noble who winds up being an insufferable jerk, then you are going to have some great moments where your players begin debating whether the reward is worth the pain of keeping this horrible human being alive.

It's always a good time to hear your players get into a heated discussion. This means they care about your story and characters. Do they let the revenant pound this NPC into paste? It might be a more satisfactory reward than that sack full of gold or the cache of magic items waiting for them. As the DM, you can always dull the flames by reminding them of how much stuff they can buy with their reward as they teeter toward letting the revenant have its bloodthirsty revenge.

Playing with the Stat Block

I love the story of the revenant, but it's CR positions it mainly against powerful parties. But it's also possible to twist the stat block of a revenant so it can be used for a first level adventure. To do this, take a weaker stat block from the *Monster Manual*, like the **noble**, but give it all the revenant abilities—its undead status, regeneration, rejuvenation, tracking, resistances, and immunities.

Then, have the PCs encounter this revenant who has a heart-wrenching story to tell. Perhaps it's a kind of *Romeo and Juliet* story where the revenant was a young noble who was in love with the “wrong” person and was murdered by the opposing family out of spite or selfish gain. The wicked, murderous family is guarded by a bound demon (pick any demon with a hefty enough CR for your adventurers) and because of this demon, the revenant can't possibly achieve their goal. Despite their failed attempts, they can see no other path than vengeance.

Their story should tug at the player's heartstrings, drawing them into the desire to help the poor wretch find peace. If you spin a good enough yarn, your players will rally their characters to the revenant's cause. They're fighting for love and striking a blow against evil at the same time. What could be more heroic?

Speak with Dead

Pim held the torch steady as she wiped the sweat-caked dust from her eyes while Drumlin used his crowbar to pry away the stones of the crypt with the care of a midwife delivering a baby. Each brick he removed sent a small cascade of dust into the cramped tunnel—and somehow into Pim’s face. Pim spat and tried to blink the dust from her stinging eyes as Drumlin tapped the stones, using his dwarven senses to understand the wall in such a way as to not cause a cave-in. Anyone other than a dwarf would have long since buried them alive and turned the tunnel into a tomb.

“Hold the torch steady, girl,” Drumlin whispered. “I need to see the color of the stone.”

Pim’s hand had long since turned numb and her arm ached from holding the thick torch aloft. Friar Douglass looked over Pim’s shoulder and muttered some complaint. Pim could feel his anxiety growing with every step closer to Mantok’s tomb. Now that they were there, she could hear the cleric hold his breath with every stone that Drumlin moved. If he bolted, the quest was over. If Mantok was indeed entombed beyond this wall, they needed the friar to cast the spell. Pim just hoped that the cleric’s love of knowledge would keep him with them long enough to wrest the centuries old secret from Mantok’s mummified lips.

“Ummm. Maybe I should go back, yes?” Friar Douglass’ voice trembled as he tried to keep it from becoming a shrill cry. Drumlin stopped. Pim could feel the dwarf’s patience fraying.

“Mantok is just beyond that wall,” Pim said to the friar, while

putting a comforting hand on Drumlin's shoulder as if to say, "Just think about the gold." The dwarf kept tapping.

"That map could be a fake," The cleric snipped.

"What if it isn't? What if he's there with all his secrets just like your holy books say? What would your abbot do if you told him you were this close to finding Mantok's tomb and you walked away?"

"Well... it's not... I..." Friar Douglass' fumbled words were cut short as a gust of rank air rushed into the tunnel. "Cover your faces!" Drumlin hissed under his breath as he turned from the wall. There, in the wall, a stone-sized gap revealed a dark, empty space. Pim held her torch close and peered in the hole. Drumlin and Friar Douglass clustered about as she gazed in at what could be a sarcophagus and perhaps a glint of gold.

I admit that this article was supposed to be all about using monsters in your adventures, but I love the creep-factor of the spell *Speak with Dead* so much that I had to include it in this horror-themed article.

Using *Speak with Dead* is a great way to create a host of spooky scenes in your adventure. Having a corpse contain a crucial piece of information which the characters must somehow find is a ton of fun, and knowing that their characters have to commit the taboo of unearthing a dead body gives your players the creeps. If they don't have the spell, the characters can have an adventure as they look for a spellcasting NPC who does, and that NPC could be a real odd-duck in their own right.



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When the adventure hinges on getting information from a corpse, the characters must go out (often under cover of darkness) and hunt through a field of graves for a particular tombstone. Then (looking out for the graveyard watch dogs) dig up a rotted corpse for the purpose of having it croak out answers to five questions. As a DM, roleplaying the gasping and gurgling responses of the corpse to the character's questions is a ton of fun. It's always a good idea to prepare some cryptic responses or riddles for the players to figure out. It's worth taking the time to flesh out this scene as it has all the creep-factor that you need to unnerve your players.

You can also have the corpse respond, "Look out behind you." And have something that goes bump in the night attack them. This is not allowed in the spell rules for *Speak with Dead*, but hey. The rules are there to break and it is fun to break them, especially when it adds a cool story moment.

Personally, I like to have a bunch of arms that are freakishly long erupt from the earth to grab the characters and try to pull them into graves. I'll use a combination of a constrictor snake stat block but give it undead immunities and resistances. I'll toss out the bite attack but keep the constrict attack. Then I'll add in the giant toad's swallow ability, remove the acid damage and use the suffocating rules instead. This way the arm grabs (constricts) and then "swallows" into the

grave. Do that, and you'll have a nice wriggly, grabby undead arm to make your players squirm.

Other ways to use *speak with dead* might include:

- An expedition to recover something of value from a lost ship frozen in the ice. The characters find the ship but not the item. They have to find out what happened by speaking with the captain, who is frozen with a ghastly grimace.
- The characters need to find out who murdered a noble or a king and must ask the corpse of the dead monarch to catch the culprit.
- The characters find a map that leads to the burial place of a legendary Luskan pirate. Her corpse should know the location of her buried treasure.

I hope this was an enjoyable foray into how to fiddle with monster stories and stat blocks and make them into your own little shop of horrors. The main takeaway that I'd love for everyone to get from this article is to see how malleable the D&D rules and the stories around the monsters are, and how you can fold, spindle, and mutilate them to fit your own tastes—just as monsters can fold, spindle, and mutilate characters to fit their tastes!

Not every D&D horror adventure needs to be a bloodbath, and often a scary tale that has a warm, soft, chewy center is what sitting around a fireplace on a moonlit night is all about.

Have fun!

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D&D Classics

We look back at decidedly curious undead within the game—or more specifically, within a jar within the game.

by Bart Carroll

When is a door not a door? In D&D, when it's a mimic of course. But when is a jar more than a jar? When it's housing the psionic brain of some twisted necrotic creature.

Needless to say, my own brain won't be preserved for its riddle-making capacity (for that, you'll need to [check other pages this issue](#)). But I always had a fondness for the “brain in a jar” concept as a D&D creature. And seeing as we're in the throes of Halloween, let's use that opportunity to look back at one of the game's odder undead (as opposed to its otter undead, which are terrifying in their own cute way).

THE BRAINS TRUST

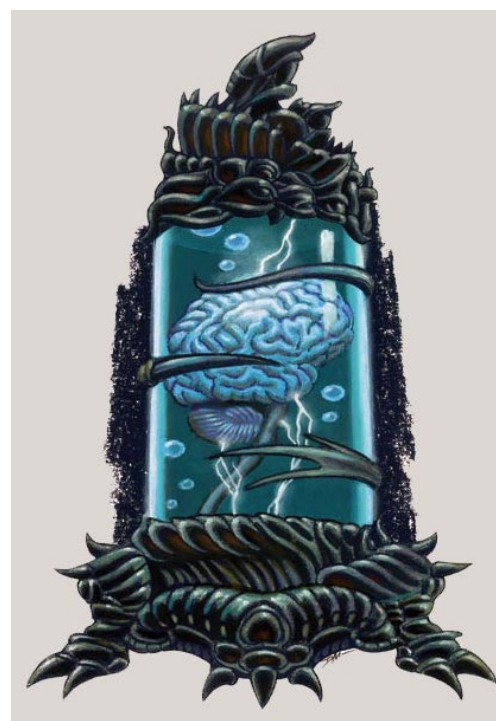
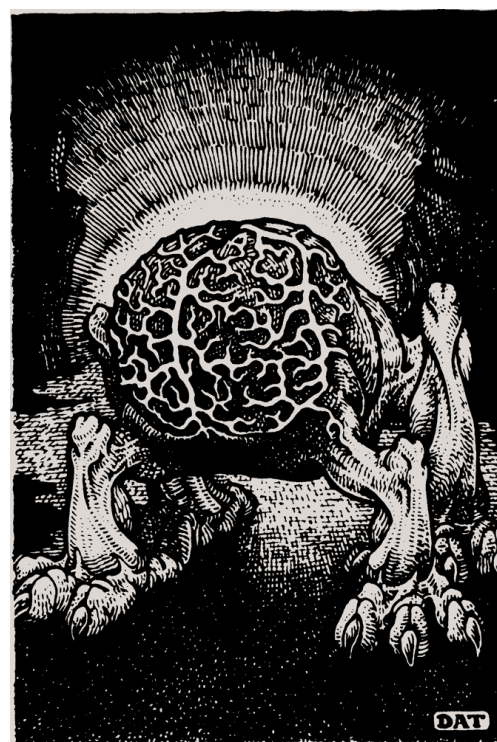
Brains have been a part of D&D

bestiaries at least since first edition's **intellect devourer**. Later on, we also met the mind flayers' elder brains in second edition's *The Illithiad*, written by Bruce Cordell. When it comes to brains in actual jars however, these were finally delivered with third edition's ***Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead***—as creatures also created by Bruce Cordell.

The concept of sentient—and sinister—brains kept alive in storage derived in part from early sci-fi shlock (a term we use in the most loving way). As Bruce recalls, this was a strong inspiration for his brain in a jar's psychic abilities:

“When I was a kid, I loved listening to a show called *Sunday at the Memories*, which replayed songs and radio entertainment from the 1940s and onward, featuring many radio plays. *Donovan's Brain* was one such play, starring Orson Welles as Dr. Corey, a physician experimenting with keeping the brain of a dead financier named Donovan alive, paid for by Donovan's wife.

“Over time, Dr. Corey picks up a weird verbal tick, where he'll say, ‘Sure, sure, sure’ in a voice that isn't his own. And he starts losing time, more and more frequently, with evidence that even though he can't remember what happened, he was awake and doing things. Finally, it's revealed that ‘Sure, sure, sure’ is a phrase Donovan used to say when he was alive... But of course, by then it's



too late. Because Donovan was not a good person, and he's even less so as a brain in a jar."

[DOWNLOAD LIBRIS MORTIS' BRAIN IN A JAR PDF](#)

KEEPING BRAINS ON ICE

Since those early sci-fi days, the concept of brains in a jar expanded more broadly across popular culture. [TV Tropes](#) has a far more comprehensive list, but from my own personal viewing I've seen examples in everything from *Star Wars* (and its B'omarr monks), *RoboCop* (Cain), the films of Jean-Pierre Jeunet (Uncle Irvin in *The City of Lost Children*), and of course *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*—with Krang, who's less confined to a jar than in an animate body of his own crafting (more on that later). There've even been numerous cards in *Magic: the Gathering* exploring the concept, including [psychosis crawler](#), [inhumaniac](#), and of course [brain in a jar](#).

When it comes to D&D, numerous brains have sneakily invaded the game. In an update to the *Tomb of Horrors*, for example, (released Halloween 2005, and still available on the [DMs Guild](#)) Bruce Cordell cleverly hid one such brain behind the walls. And for Extra Life's *Lost Laboratory of Kwalish*, I used them to help populate (and secretly continue to operate) the crashed ship of the Barrier Peaks. So now it's with great excitement to see the brain in a jar makes its truly official return, appearing in *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*.

Will Doyle, as part of the book's writing team, told us about including the brains: "*Rime of the Frostmaiden* is rooted in oppressive themes: isolation, horror, and paranoia. When Stacey [Allan] and I sat down to design the ruined Netherese enclave of Ythryn, we circled back to some classic sources of inspiration: movies like *The Thing* and *Alien*, and the writings of H.P. Lovecraft (especially *At the Mountains of Madness*). I've always felt that D&D's brain in a jar was inspired by the mi-go brain cylinders from Lovecraft's novella *The Whisperer in Darkness*.

"When designing Ythryn, we saw a need for a similar sense of cosmic horror."

WARNING SPOILERS



For those not familiar, the lost empire of Netheril was an advanced magical civilization; and as noted in *Icewind Dale*: “The wizards of bygone Netheril wielded magic that could reshape the world. They used such magic to raise their cities into the sky. The city of Ythryn was one such wonder. It crashed long ago but still exists, buried under the Reghed Glacier on the eastern edge of Icewind Dale.”

According to Will, when Ythryn crashed into the glacier where it now resides, its wizards found themselves trapped and slowly dying. “To preserve their lives indefinitely, we figured they could place their own brains into jars, allowing them to live on after their bodies withered and died. Of course, such an existence would be cold and maddening, so we decided that they would use their magic to create an illusory world around them.

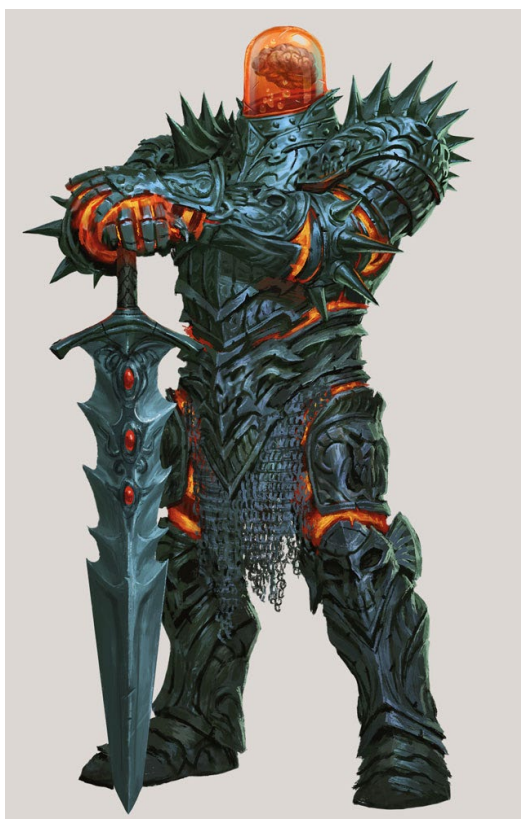
“When you enter the Spire of Iriolarthas, you find a courtly ball in progress—but it’s all an illusion. If you break the spell, you see the jars hovering around the empty chamber, acting out the movements of the dance. We thought that was a creepy image!”

[DOWNLOAD ICEWIND DALE’S BRAIN IN A JAR PDF](#)

THE WANDERING MIND

By their nature, brains in a jar are not especially mobile and so rely on their psychic powers to overthrow their enemies and create loyal servants. Yet as immortal enemies, these brains have more than enough time to devise diabolical schemes... as well as “improve” their containers. In *Icewind Dale*, one of the more important figures you might meet is a Veneranda—a wizardly brain committed to

undoing the ruin of Ythryn.



“In our original draft, Veneranda was accompanied by a loyal helmed horror,” Will reveals. “Chris [Perkins] and his team tweaked that idea to turn the helmed horror into a mechanical body for Veneranda’s brain jar, which blew us away.

“That’s one of the great things about working on D&D adventures—your ideas often get expanded and polished into something better that you could hope for on your own. Veneranda’s plans to save Ythryn are truly epic in scope, and we look forward to hearing about how that plays out at tables around

the world.”

WAYS TO PLAY

When it comes to running brains in a jar in your game—whether in *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* or beyond—you might consider the following:

- As Will notes, at least for the Icewind Dale region: “I wouldn’t be able to resist playing on the storyline of *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Thing*—the players discover a ruined outpost where the explorers have been massacred after digging up a brain in a jar from the ice. Using *detect thoughts* and *charm person*, a brain could easily turn the explorers against each other, especially if tensions in the group are already frayed. Finding evidence that the explorers killed each other over their find would be a great lead up to the final confrontation with the brain.
- While the laboratories used to create brains in a jar make for a creepy enough setting, players might also come across a workshop

or glasswork factory where the jars themselves are being manufactured. An investigation leads to a dangerous brain, or a villain planning to store their brain in a jar.

- Who’s brain is it anyway? Fourth edition’s *Open Grave* posited that different brains or even different jars might affect the creature within. You might customize your own version of a brain as an NPC with unique personality traits, phobias, or even known spells. For more on creating villains and NPCs, consult pages 89-97 of the *DMG*.

[DOWNLOAD OPEN GRAVE’S BRAIN IN A JAR PDF](#)

Since this is *Dragon Classics*, we’d be remiss not to celebrate brains appearing in past *Dragon* (and *Dungeon*) magazines! Here are a few excerpts for use in your campaigns:

DRAGON 364: Alchemical Imbalance

When it comes to Halloween ickiness, the following article comes from Bruce Cordell (naturally) and Chris Sims. What could be more dangerous than goblins? How about goblins dabbling in dangerous alchemy! The article’s adventure hooks are edition-neutral, and the use of missing caravans can easily be placed within Icewind Dale.

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DUNGEON 201: Face of the Moon

In this adventure from John “Ross” Rossomangno, a team of illithid and their elder brain have established a hidden laboratory on no less a remote location than the moon! If you’re planning to run the adventure for your current campaign, its monsters and skill checks will need to be updated, but still—mind flayers, a secret moon base, and clones? What’s not to love!

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DRAGON 393: Tomb of Meowers

And finally, Shelly Mazzanoble wrote about her own experiences

exploring a version of the *Tomb of Horrors*. Combined with the delightful sci-fi absurdities of *Gamma World*, she ran a party of cats (one of which appears elsewhere this issue) led by their brain in a jar patron.

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OUR THANKS...

First to Bruce Cordell, for taking the time to chat about his creation of the brain in a jar. You can find more on Bruce's current activities [here](#).

Thanks also to Will Doyle, content manager for the Adventurers League *Oracle of War* Eberron campaign, which previews at conventions worldwide and releases a new adventure each month on the DMs Guild. You can find him [@beholderpie](#).

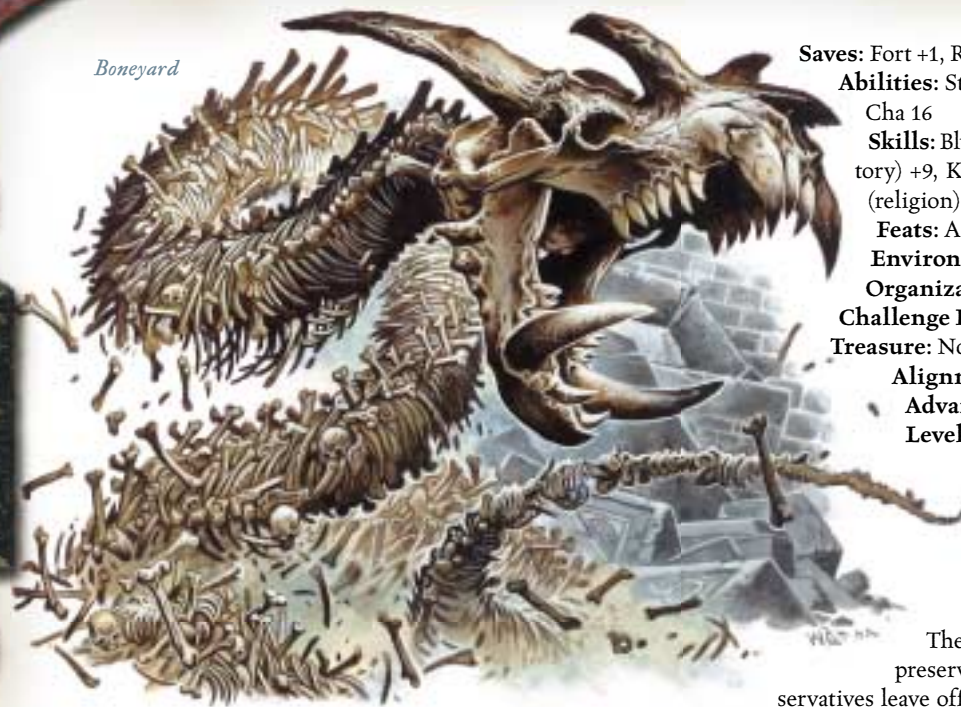
As a final query, we asked Will which would be the worst way to spend undeath: as a brain in a jar, a vampire, or a ghost?

“Being a ghost would suck the most, because you have to spend all your immortality moaning about the circumstances of your own death. It would be a total downer. Vampires and brains in a jar are at least trying to enjoy their undead nature, to some degree. I also believe our descendants are probably going to be living as brains in a jar before too long, so we shouldn't knock it.”

Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. Order your copy at your [local game store](#), bookstores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#). Also available as a digital version at [D&D Beyond](#), [Fantasy Grounds](#), and [Roll20](#).

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Boneyard



Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6

Abilities: Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (psionics) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +9, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: 4–9 HD (Tiny)

Level Adjustment: —

Something gray and shriveled sloshes within a grimy glass canister—a disembodied brain afloat in alchemical preservatives.

Inescapable Craving: A boneyard has an inescapable craving (see the Undead Metabolism section in Chapter 1) for bones, which it satisfies by using its bone subsumption ability.

Summon Skeletons (Su): A boneyard can summon undead creatures from its own bones once per day: 3–6 troll skeletons or 2–4 young adult red dragon skeletons. The undead arrive in 1d10 rounds and serve for 1 hour or until they are reabsorbed back into the boneyard.

Utter Subsumption (Su): If a boneyard wins a grapple check after using its improved grab ability, it attempts to pin the target on its next action. A boneyard that begins a turn with a victim still pinned and that makes one more successful grapple check automatically tears every bone from the victim's body, instantly killing the victim.

The brain in a jar is a masterpiece of preservation—but where alchemical preservatives leave off, necromancy picks up. An animate brain in a jar is, in truth, an undead creature. Additionally, possibly because it is free of the need to worry about controlling and animating an entire body, a brain in a jar possesses potent mental powers.

Of course, merely removing the brain of a zombie or some other undead creature and storing it in alchemical preservatives is not enough to create an undead brain with psionic ability. The ritual of extraction, the spells of formulation, and the alchemical recipes of preservation are closely guarded secrets held by only a few master necromancers.

The creation of a brain in a jar is difficult and fraught with danger, because once its mental powers are fully developed, this undead creature is adept at controlling the thoughts and minds of other creatures, especially living creatures. It is not unknown for a brain in a jar to take control over the necromancer who created it.

A brain in a jar weighs about 25 pounds, which includes the weight of the glass canister and the preservative fluids.

A brain in a jar can speak telepathically to any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

COMBAT

A brain in a jar prefers control to direct combat, since brains in fragile glass jars can't stand too much jostling. However, when it can't stay completely clear of combat, it seeks to put off aggressors with its mind thrust ability.

Brain in a jar



BRAIN IN A JAR

Tiny Undead

Hit Dice: 3d12 (19 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: Fly 30 ft. (8 squares) (good)

Armor Class: 13 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: —/—

Attack: —

Full Attack: —

Space/Reach: 1 ft./—

Special Attacks: Mind thrust, psionics, rebuke undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+6, 3rd)

Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., madness, telepathy, undead traits, +4 turn resistance

Mind Thrust (Su): A brain in a jar can spend a standard action to deliver a massive assault on the thought pathways of any one creature, undermining its intellect. This mind thrust deals 2d10 points of damage to any target creature that fails a DC 14 Will save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Madness (Su): Anyone targeting a brain in a jar with a thought detection, mind control, or any sort of telepathic or psionic ability that makes direct contact with its tortured mind takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

Psionics (Sp): 3/day—*suggestion* (DC 16), *telekinesis* (DC 18); 1/day—*dominate person* (DC 18). Manifest level 10th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Rebuke Undead (Su): A brain in a jar can rebuke or command undead as a cleric of the same level as the brain's HD.

CARCASS EATER

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+3 (7 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 10 ft.

Armor Class: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/−5

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d4−1)

Full Attack: 2 claws +4 melee (1d2−1) and bite −1 melee (1d4−1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Blood frenzy

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +3, Spot +3

Feats: Track, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Temperate forests

Organization: Solitary, pair, or throng (6–9)

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Advancement: 2 HD (Small)

Level Adjustment: —

This gore-streaked, four-footed animal seems like a cross between a overlarge rat and a wolf, though even that can't explain the extraordinary size of its toothy jaws.

Carcass eaters are most often found digging up fresh graves for food or, where opportunity is less available, hunting the night for prey.

An adult carcass eater is 3 to 4 feet long and weighs 65 to 75 pounds.

COMBAT

Carcass eaters attack with their sharp claws and teeth.

Blood Frenzy (Ex): A carcass eater that deals damage in combat against a living creature scents blood, which causes it to fly into a frenzy the

following round. While in a blood frenzy, a carcass eater gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and −2 to Armor Class. Sensing its victim's death, the carcass eater claws and bites until its opponent is brought to negative hit points, at which time the creature immediately gains an additional bite attack against its fallen foe. This attack automatically hits, dealing 1d4+1 points of damage (which takes into account the +4 Strength bonus). A carcass eater cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Skills: A carcass eater has a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

CINDERSPAWN

Large Undead (Fire)

Hit Dice: 10d12 (65 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (−1 size, +5 Dex, +3 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+10

Attack: Touch +9 melee (2d6 cold plus 1d6 Cha drain)

Full Attack: Touch +9 melee (2d6 cold plus 1d6 Cha drain)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Charisma drain

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., elemental turning vulnerability, frostfire shield, immunity to fire, inescapable craving, undead traits, vulnerability to cold

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +7

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 21, Con —, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 17

Skills: Jump +26, Listen +13, Move Silently +18, Spot +13

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, pair, or gang (3–5)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 11–20 HD (Large); 16–30 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +4

This tall, gaunt, coal-black humanoid flickers with a blue-white flame. Its bright yellow eyes gleam with menace.

Cinderspawn are burnt-out undead remnants of creatures of elemental fire. They hate living creatures for their warmth and seek to destroy all such beings.

Carcass eater





BRAIN IN A JAR

Through an eldritch ritual combining alchemy, necromancy, and grim surgical precision, the brain of a mortal being (willing or unwilling) is encased in a glass jar filled with preserving fluids and the liquefied goop of their body's flesh. The transformation renders the brain immortal and imbues it with psionic power, so that it can spend eternity plotting and executing its desires.

A brain in a jar can speak without vocal cords, psionically projecting its disembodied voice outward for all to hear. It enjoys conversation so much that it is prone to talking for hours on end, sometimes to itself if there are no others with whom it can speak. It also likes to think out loud and reflect on the events and decisions that led to its great transformation.

Being divorced from one's body can tax the mind, and the longer a brain in a jar exists, the more likely some form of insanity will take hold of it. A brain in a jar is particularly susceptible to dementia, schizophrenia, and paranoia.

Immortal Vessels. The brain floats in a jar of solution, pulsating as it reacts to its surroundings. Some brains have been known to thump against the walls of their containers when excited or vexed. A jar's metal casing might be rusty but serviceable, or an elegantly wrought masterwork, depending on its creator. A brain in a jar weighs roughly 125 pounds.

BRAIN IN A JAR

Small undead, any alignment

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d6 + 20)

Speed 0 ft., fly 10 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	3 (–4)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +6, Cha +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10; see also “Detect Sentence” below

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Detect Sentence. The brain can sense the presence and location of any creature within 300 feet of it that has an Intelligence of 3 or higher, regardless of interposing barriers, unless the creature is protected by a *mind blank* spell.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The brain's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *chill touch* (see “Actions” below), *detect thoughts*, *mage hand*, *zone of truth*

3/day each: *charm person*, *hold person*

1/day each: *compulsion*, *hold monster*, *sleep* (3rd-level version), *Tasha's hideous laughter*

Magic Resistance. The brain has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magic effects.

Unusual Nature. The brain doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Chill Touch (Cantrip). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage, and the target can't regain hit points until the start of the brain's next turn. If the target is undead, it also has disadvantage on attack rolls against the brain until the end of the brain's next turn.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5–6). The brain magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw or take 17 (3d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

BRAIN IN A JAR

A **BRAIN IN A JAR** IS THE PRESERVED BRAIN of a sinister being who sought to escape death. Through ritual magic and complicated alchemical processes, the brain is kept alive, retaining all the memories and mental faculties of its former host. The creature usually has some malevolent goal that could not be achieved in life, which drove the brain's former host to take desperate measures to achieve longevity.

Brain in a Broken Jar		Level 4 Controller
Small natural animate		XP 175
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +5; darkvision	
HP 50; Bloodied 25		
AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 18		
Speed fly 4 (hover)		
✈ Dominate (standard; at-will) ♦ Charm		
Ranged 10; +7 vs. Will; the target is dominated until the end of the brain in a broken jar's next turn.		
⚡ Mind Stab (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +8 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will (save ends).		
👁 Faulty Invisibility (minor; recharge 2) ♦ Illusion		
The brain becomes invisible until the start of its next turn.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, telepathy 10	
Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9		
Str 6 (+0)	Dex 10 (+2)	Wis 16 (+5)
Con 10 (+2)	Int 18 (+6)	Cha 14 (+4)

BRAIN IN A BROKEN JAR TACTICS

Despite the brain's insanity, it recognizes its physical vulnerability. It tries to maintain invisibility while keeping distant from enemies. A brain in a broken jar uses *mind thrust* to weaken an opponent's Will before attempting to use *dominate* on the target. The brain typically orders a dominated creature to either defend it or to leave the area.

Brain in a Jar		Level 6 Controller
Small natural animate		XP 250
Initiative +3 Senses Perception +6; darkvision		
HP 68; Bloodied 34		
AC 20; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 19		
Speed fly 4 (hover)		
✈ Dominate (standard; at-will) ♦ Charm		
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Will, the target is dominated (save ends). A brain in a jar can dominate only one creature at a time.		
✈ Telekinetic Thrust (minor; at-will)		
Ranged 6; +9 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 4 squares, and if the target ends the push adjacent to a wall, it is knocked prone.		
⚡ Mind Stab (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Close burst 4; +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will (save ends).		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, telepathy 10
Skills Arcana +13, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11		
Str 6 (+1)	Dex 10 (+3)	Wis 16 (+6)
Con 12 (+4)	Int 20 (+8)	Cha 16 (+6)

BRAIN IN A JAR TACTICS

Anything that disturbs this brain's private meditations antagonizes the creature. However, the brain knows its physical weakness, so it enters combat only as a last resort. The creature attempts to threaten, negotiate, or fool a foe before attacking.

If forced into combat, a brain in a jar uses *mind thrust* on the opponent that appears most susceptible. It then *dominates* the target and orders it to attack other foes. The creature employs *telekinetic thrust* to push away opponents, especially toward obstacles and other dangers.

Brain in an Armored Jar		Level 9 Artillery
Medium natural animate		XP 400
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +6; darkvision	
HP 77; Bloodied 38		
AC 22; Fortitude 20, Reflex 18, Will 20		
Speed fly 6 (hover)		
Ⓣ Slam (standard; at-will)		
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.		
⚡ Psychic Overload (standard; recharge 2) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 8; +12 vs. Will; the target loses a healing surge, and the brain in an armored jar makes a secondary attack against another creature in range. Secondary Attack: +10 vs. Will; the target takes psychic damage equal to the first target's healing surge value.		
⚡ Electrical Discharge (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning		
Close burst 3; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). Miss: Half damage, and the target is not dazed.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, telepathy 10	
Skills Intimidate +9		
Str 18 (+8)	Dex 17 (+7)	Wis 15 (+6)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 18 (+8)	Cha 10 (+4)

BRAIN IN AN ARMORED JAR TACTICS

This is the quickest type of brain in a jar to leap into combat. It unleashes *electrical discharge* to daze opponents and then slams into them with its heavy jar. A brain in an armored jar uses *psychic overload* when possible, targeting the most threatening creatures.

Exalted Brain in a Jar		Level 12 Controller
Medium natural animate		XP 700
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +9; darkvision	
HP 123; Bloodied 61		
AC 26; Fortitude 22, Reflex 18, Will 24		
Speed fly 6 (hover)		
⬇ Teleportation Field (immediate reaction, when an enemy hits the exalted brain in a jar with a melee attack; at-will) ♦ Teleportation		
Targets the triggering creature; +16 vs. Will; the target is teleported up to 8 squares.		
✈ Fearful Recoil (minor; at-will)		
Ranged 8; +14 vs. Will; the target immediately moves its speed plus 4 squares away from the exalted brain in a jar. The target avoids hazardous terrain and difficult terrain if possible.		
✈ Supreme Domination (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Charm		
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).		

◀ **Mind Stab** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**

Close burst 5; +16 vs. Will; 1d10 + 8 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, telepathy 10
Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +15
Str 12 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 21 (+11) **Cha** 18 (+10)

EXALTED BRAIN IN A JAR TACTICS

This brain is a master of deflection and evasion. An exalted brain in a jar uses *teleportation field* to send away attacks while bombarding its enemies with attacks. The creature uses *mind thrust* to weaken an opponent's willpower before employing *supreme domination* to capture the target's mind.

BRAIN IN A JAR LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 14: Different kinds of brains in jars exist, though each is created using the same principles.

A brain in a broken jar is created through incomplete rituals, spoiling fluids, or damaged containers. A brain in a broken jar is usually deranged.

A brain placed within a more heavily armored container retains its sanity. The armored jar protects the brain from harm or serves as an eternal prison for the brain inside. In a few rare cases, these armored brains exist to chronicle past history and lore.

The most powerful of these creatures is the exalted brain in a jar. This is a brain taken from a powerful creature by devotees to preserve the subject's knowledge and wisdom.

In general, a brain in a jar prefers an isolated existence. Some wall themselves within former laboratories and dungeons, where they slip into madness.

DC 19: The preservation fluid within a brain's jar is a valuable alchemical material, especially useful for crafting undead. Some alchemists claim that the fluid can be distilled into an elixir that imparts the memory and knowledge of the jar's occupant brain.

DC 21: The brains of these creatures often come from cult leaders or advisors, whom the subject's associates have tried to eternally preserve. While such brains are usually evil, it is sometimes possible to return a brain to its host body to grant it a peaceful death.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

The brains often draft constructs and undead to guard them against intruders.

Level 3 Encounter (XP 775)

- ♦ 1 bonewretch skeleton (level 4 skirmisher, page 180)
- ♦ 1 brain in a broken jar (level 4 controller)



BRAIN IN A JAR

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- ♦ 1 clay scout (level 2 lurker, MM 156)
- ♦ 2 iron defenders (level 3 soldier, MM 156)

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,200)

- ♦ 1 brain in a jar (level 6 controller)
- ♦ 2 crawling claw swarms (level 4 soldier, page 142)
- ♦ 4 skeletal archers (level 3 artillery, page 180)

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,100)

- ♦ 1 brain in an armored jar (level 9 artillery)
- ♦ 2 shattergloom skeletons (level 8 soldier, page 181)
- ♦ 2 skeletal tomb guardians (level 10 brute, MM 235)

Level 12 Encounter (XP 3,300)

- ♦ 1 cadaver golem (level 12 elite brute, page 156)
- ♦ 1 exalted brain in a jar (level 12 controller)
- ♦ 4 putrescent zombies (level 11 minion, page 196)
- ♦ 1 spine creep skeleton (level 11 soldier, page 182)

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DRAGON™

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT



ALCHEMICAL IMBALANCE

BY BRUCE CORDELL AND CHRIS SIMS

illustrations by Wayne England

GOBLINS ARE WICKED and grasping, and despite their stature, they lack some of the cowardice that other small humanoids display. Worse still, they're cunning and inventive, as well as perversely resourceful. They know and use dark sorcery and cruel equipment. The expansion of civilization has driven them to the borderlands, but goblins covet the territories occupied by friendlier folk, and they crave the wealth and decadence offered by wrongful conquest and theft.

What if the nasty ingenuity natural to goblins allowed an unusual leader to rise among them? How would his knack for alchemy and black magic shape his plans? How would he use his powers to direct his avaricious people, and how would he help them gain an advantage over benevolent folk? What would need to be done to stop him? Who would take on that task?

This article is aimed at helping you construct an adventure for 3rd- to 4th-level PCs.

BILE SPIDER TRIBE

The Bile Spider goblins were once little different than any other. They huddled in caves and mounted minor raids to supplement their supplies. Without attracting enough notice to be worthy of smiting, they led their nasty lives on the far-flung outskirts of anything that



could be called civilization. They honored the war god Bane by subjugating lesser tribes, taming monsters, harassing travelers, and practicing black arts.

Among these arts is a long tradition of alchemical practice among the tribe's magicians. In the past, the Bile Spiders used these techniques to give themselves edges in battle, poison foes, and create instant gouts of flame without magic. But the practice of alchemy has evolved to a new height among these goblins.

A talented hexer named Ziguarz has risen to prominence among the Bile Spiders. After spending years toiling deep in the carved caves that serve the tribe as a lair, Ziguarz managed to come up with foul alchemical agents that can alter goblins, their pet

spiders, and other creatures into terrifying fighting beasts. Using his formulas, Ziguarz seized power from his weaker kin, becoming chief of the tribe.

Bile Spider warriors vie for the "honor" of using Ziguarz's formulas. They use their newfound strength and viciousness to expand Bile Spider territory, and the tribe is now large. It includes numerous monstrous creatures not often found among mere goblins, and it integrates barbaric bugbears.

Tribal scouts and warriors search far and wide for materials for Ziguarz's alchemy. The tribe is outgrowing its territory. Ziguarz has discovered that his techniques are improved by the use of materials harvested from other sentient beings. He has turned his



eyes toward civilized lands, wondering if his altered soldiers can lead the tribe to greater conquests. He also desires enough slaves, human, elf, dwarf, or otherwise, to fuel his malevolent research.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As the Bile Spiders grow bolder, search wider areas for reagents, and take prisoners for Ziguarz's new line of study, they're unlikely to remain unnoticed for long. Any or all these might be hooks to attract heroic attention. This section uses locations set in the Nentir Vale, which is described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. You can replace them with locations from your own campaign if you wish.

Vanished Caravan: A small caravan was lost on an old trade trail through the wilderness from Nenlast. Travelers that have passed that way report seeing signs of a battle on the road, but little debris and no bodies were apparent. No member of the merchant party appears to have escaped the mysterious attack.

Missing People: A local herbalist named Velma appears to have been snatched in the night from the outskirts of the borderlands village of Nenlast. Her home was carefully looted of all her reagents and supplies. The same night, livestock and a farming family disappeared, with signs of foul play.

Goblin Skirmishes: When coming to trade in Nenlast, Tigerclaw barbarians of the Winterbole Forest report clashes with goblins. Although goblins aren't unusual in the forest, these particular goblins are fierce, sometimes strangely deformed, and they often take prisoners or leave blood-drained corpses.

Alchemical Mutant Rampage: A misshapen rage drake rampaged through a lumber camp near Nenlast a few days ago. It had Dwarven runes inscribed and burned into it, but the language appears to be a mystical form of Goblin. A spider of unusual size and coloration attacked hunters in the Winterbole Forest at about the same time.

INVESTIGATION

Depending on the hook, the PCs can look into the problem in a variety of ways. Here, skill challenges help simulate investigation. When characters make skill checks in response to a series of changing conditions, with success or failure being uncertain, they're in a skill challenge. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more on skill challenges.

VANISHED CARAVAN

It's easy enough to find the site at which the caravan was attacked by asking around (Streetwise DC 10). The place is littered with signs of battle.

Setup: For the PCs to discover goblins were behind the attack (the Bile Spider goblin tribe in particular) and from which direction the attack came, the PCs must spend time searching the battle area for clues and putting together the pieces.

Level: 3.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures).

Primary Skills: Nature, Perception, History.

Perception DC 20: PCs look for tell-tale clues about the attackers in the detritus of combat. First success with this skill opens up the use of the Nature skill. PCs find broken weaponry, footprints, and a crude iron emblem that looks like a spider.

Perception DC 15: Second success with Perception shows the direction from which the attack came, and to where the attackers retreated (the same direction).

Nature DC 18: The characters can attempt to identify the kinds of creatures that leave a particular size of print behind and the kind of weapons. First success with this challenge opens up the use of the History skill. The footprints are probably goblin and spider, and the weaponry is of goblin make, which means the spider emblem is also likely one used by goblins.

History DC 15: A PC suddenly puts two and two together—a tribe of goblins called the Bile Spiders has been around for some time and it is located in

the Nentir Vale. It's unlike the Bile Spiders to be so daring. Success on this check provides general information about the Bile Spider and their role in your campaign's past.

Success: The characters know where to go to find the Bile Spiders goblin tribe. The tracks of the raiders lead into the Winterbole Forest.

Failure: Even a partial failure still lets PCs know from which direction the attackers came and went.

MISSING PEOPLE

Asking around reveals Velma was odd but liked. She had many friends and no enemies (DC 10 Streetwise check). PCs easily learn where to find Velma's home. This skill challenge is provided for Velma's house, but a similar challenge at the farmstead reveals a gruesome clash with goblins and animals, and the tracks of the raiders, which lead into the Winterbole Forest.

Setup: For the PCs to discover that reagents good for alchemy and poisons were taken from Velma's home, that goblin tracks litter the area, and that there was little struggle, the PCs must spend time searching the residence and thinking about what they find.

Level: 3.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Heal, Nature, Perception.

Perception DC 20: Characters look for telltale clues in Velma's house. One success allows a PC to find sticky crimson material—is it blood? This opens up the use of the Heal skill.

A second successful Perception check shows signs that Velma was subdued while sleeping, tied with rope (bits of cut rope remain), and dragged away. Muddy footprints of small feet in crude boots lead into, around, and back out of the house. The direction the interlopers departed from the house toward the Winterbole Forest is discernable. This Perception check also opens up the use of the Nature skill.

Heal DC 18: Is the spilled red material blood? Success opens up Arcana skill—no, it's not blood. It's something artificial. Moreover, there is no other sign that Velma was injured.

Arcana DC 20: The dried material is a common alchemical reagent used in mild poisons. Looking around the house reveals that Velma had a supply of alchemical reagents, but they are mostly gone. Little seems disturbed; however the creature that removed the reagents took care to remove them delicately.

Nature DC 18: The PCs can attempt to identify the kinds of creatures that leave a particular size of print behind: Goblins!

Success: The characters know goblins entered the house and probably took the reagents specifically when they took Velma.

Failure: Even a partial failure still lets PCs know from which direction the attackers came. The tracks of the raiders lead into the Winterbole Forest.

GOBLIN SKIRMISHES

A few successful Streetwise checks can lead the party to the right Tigerclaw barbarians. Use the previous examples and the entry on skill challenges in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to design one of your challenges for this investigation.

A negotiation skill challenge involving Diplomacy, Insight, History, and Nature can gain enough information from the barbarians to point the party to a skirmish site and identify the goblins as Bile Spider folk. Tigerclaw barbarians are taciturn and don't like strangers, so the PCs have to earn their trust. The characters can investigate the skirmish area using Arcana, Nature, Heal, and Perception. They discover a slain and deformed goblin, and his body reveals that he was altered by a toxin or foreign substance. The site also has tracks.

ALCHEMICAL MUTANT RAMPAGE

The bodies of the misshapen beasts can be examined like the body of the goblin in Goblin Skirmishes above. PCs can do legwork among the woodcutters in the lumber camp or talk to the hunters who survived the spider assault.

Use the previous examples and the entry on skill challenges in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to design one of your challenges for this investigation.

Either is a negotiation skill challenge involving Diplomacy, Insight, History, and Nature. It can reveal the Bile Spider connection and lead the characters into the Winterbole Forest. The rage drake can be tracked easily.

GOBLINS

A successful Nature check can tell PCs more about goblins in general, as detailed in the Goblin entry of the *Monster Manual*. History can be used to learn more about the Bile Spiders in particular.

WINTERBOLE FOREST

Venturing deeper into the Winterbole Forest while seeking the Bile Spider goblins is risky. In any case, tracking the Bile Spider raiders to their lair is a simple skill challenge that can lead to encounters in the Winterbole Forest and eventually to the Bile Spider lair.





ROLL VS. ROLE

Setup: The PCs must track the prints back to the raider lair.

Level: 3.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures).

Primary Skills: Perception.

Perception DC 20: Characters try to follow the tracks through rough forested terrain. Four successes lead them to the lair entrance, but a failure gets PCs off track and potentially triggers an encounter.

Success: The characters discover the entrance to the Bile Spider's cavern lair after a day of travel.

Failure: The PCs spend the day wandering the forest without finding the Bile Spider lair. They also run into trouble. Once they deal with the combat encounter described below, they can attempt the skill challenge again to reacquire the tracks and discover their true goal.

Each additional failure doesn't necessarily indicate a new random encounter, though it could at your option. Reuse the encounter provided below, or better yet, substitute a few monsters of similar level from the *Monster Manual*. Feel free to use anything that

a goblin tribe with weird alchemical resources might control.

Combat Encounter: The first time PCs go off track and fail the skill challenge to track the goblins back to the lair, they run into trouble.

Reagent Seekers (Level 3; 775 XP): The mad goblin alchemist Ziguarz sends his minions to search the forest. One altered skullcleaver forms the nucleus of a small group of creatures that roam the forest in search of reagents. The skullcleaver is deformed, bloated, and occasionally burps green gas.

- ◆ Altered goblin skullcleaver (level 3 brute)
- ◆ 2 goblin warriors (level 1 skirmisher)
- ◆ Deathjump spider (level 4 skirmisher)
- ◆ 2 goblin sharpshooters (level 2 artillery)

The altered skullcleaver possess the *alchemical breath* power (see below), in addition to its normal abilities. It uses *alchemical breath* as its very first action, then rushes into battle. It fights to the death, but the other goblins might flee, leading the characters back to the Bile Spider lair.

Other altered creatures encountered in the course of this adventure might have *alchemical breath* as an additional power.

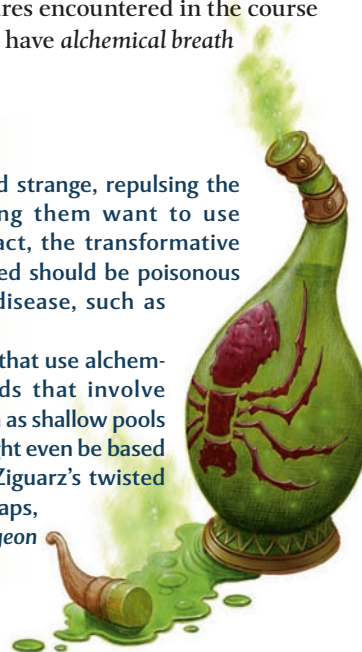
THE HAZARDS OF ALCHEMY

Ziguarz's work is described as alchemy. This means you should feel free to give the goblins a few bizarre devices that act like very minor magic items but aren't. See the kobold slinger (*Monster Manual* 168) for some examples. The Bile Spiders have access to deathjump spider venom, and you can use that as an example of other poisons you can create. If you have access to *Adventurer's Vault*, use level-appropriate alchemical devices from that book.

The powers described in this article go a ways toward reinforcing the alchemical take on Ziguarz and the Bile Spiders. By adding descriptive elements, such as deformities that have no actual mechanical effect, you add to the feel of the Bile Spiders. These gob-

lins should seem vile and strange, repulsing the PCs rather than making them want to use Ziguarz's formulas. In fact, the transformative agents Ziguarz has created should be poisonous to the PCs or cause a disease, such as mindfire or slimy doom.

You can include traps that use alchemical devices and hazards that involve alchemical pollution, such as shallow pools of mixed agents. They might even be based on magic traps but use Ziguarz's twisted formulas. For more on traps, see Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.



Alchemical Breath

Altered Attack

Green smog reaches like a living tendril toward its target. The smell is horrendous.

Encounter ◆ Arcane, Acid

Standard Ranged 10

Target: One creature

Attack: Constitution vs. Will

Hit: 1d6 + Constitution modifier acid damage, and ongoing acid damage equal to Constitution modifier (save ends).

BILE SPIDER CUSTOMIZATION

When constructing the Bile Spider lair, consider the following monsters in addition to goblinoids. Modify fire creatures to deal and resist acid damage instead.

- ◆ Shadowhunter bat, fire bat (*Monster Manual* page 27)
- ◆ Fire beetle, tangler beetle (*Monster Manual* page 30)
- ◆ Cavern choker (*Monster Manual* page 42)—depicted as an altered goblin
- ◆ Guard drake, spitting drake, and rage drake (*Monster Manual* page 90)—use the rage drake sparingly, and depict it as a bloated alchemical brute.
- ◆ Ochre jelly (*Monster Manual* page 202)—depicted as a weird alchemical ooze, maybe with hints of goblin features
- ◆ Rats, especially the dire rat (*Monster Manual* page 219)
- ◆ Blazing skeleton (*Monster Manual* page 235)—use sparingly
- ◆ Deathjump spider, bloodweb spider swarm (*Monster Manual* page 246)—use the bloodweb swarm sparingly
- ◆ Zombies, especially the corruption corpse (*Monster Manual* page 274)—depict as alchemically altered undead goblins or bugbears

BILE SPIDER LAIR

Once PCs reach the goblin caves, you can use a variety of different map types for terrain. Some of the caverns are natural, while the Bile Spiders have carved others.

Social Encounters: Characters can try to Bluff or Intimidate their way into the Bile Spider lair by overcoming a level 3, complexity 3 negotiation skill challenge. Pretending to be emissaries bearing reagents or news of an alliance with other evil forces is the surest way to succeed in this. The guards usher successful PCs to a goblin underboss (*Monster Manual* 138), where another successful negotiation could see the characters to Glax. This is a dangerous gambit, because only the savviest negotiators can avoid violence at that point, and they find enemies on all sides.

Combat Encounters: The way the PCs try to gain entrance to the lair determines the number of encounters they are likely to face. If they try to fight their way directly in or find a secondary entrance and sneak in, they end up facing Bile Spider goblins and their minions before the venturing deep enough to find Ziguarz. Here is one example.

Bile Spider Checkpoint (Level 3; 825 XP): At some point, the PCs have to fight their way past a hardened checkpoint surrounded by goblin living areas. While doing so, they attract the attention of goblins living in the nearby areas, who rush to attack.

- ◆ 1 *altered* goblin hexer (level 3 controller)
- ◆ 1 *altered* needlefang drake swarm (level 2 soldier)
- ◆ 2 goblin sharpshooters (level 2 artillery)
- ◆ 2 goblin warriors (level 1 skirmisher)
- ◆ 4 goblin cutters (level 1 minion)

The hexer, one warrior, and sharpshooters enjoy cover behind a low barricade made of stacked rubble and debris, while the drakes swarm over the barricade. The second goblin warrior and the cutters arrive from nearby rooms at the start of the second round. The warriors chuck their javelins, then fall back if one or more characters pass the barrier. The hexer and sharpshooters stay behind the barricade to launch attacks. The drake swarm attacks the first character within reach.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The leaders of the Bile Spiders are the most dangerous foes the PCs face in this scenario.

GLAX, BILE SPIDER WARCHIEF

The “boss” of the Bile Spiders, Glax ascended to her position with Ziguarz. A bloodthirsty bully with a penchant for eating those that dare oppose her, Glax serves as Ziguarz’s military commander. She is placed to lead any major operation the Bile Spiders might one day undertake. Right now, she coordinates units of goblins that venture abroad to collect reagents and harass Bile Spider enemies, such as the Tigerclaw barbarians.

Social Encounter: Glax is bellicose, boastful, and bullying. Only slightly less egotistical than Ziguarz, she’s smart enough to realize that the goblin alchemist should be allowed to make important decisions about the Bile Spiders. He has powers beyond Glax’s reckoning. It’s better to serve than to end up like the Bile Spiders’ former chief. But Glax is even more prone to using aggressive and bloody means to solve her problems.

Glax assumes a diplomatic stance toward non-goblin intruders only if one of her underbosses brings such interlopers to her in peace. By using Bluff, Insight, Intimidate, and Religion to succeed on a level 4, complexity 4 skill challenge negotiation, the PCs can continue a diplomatic ruse. Diplomacy checks result in automatic failures during this skill challenge—Glax hates honeyed words, which she takes as a sign of weakness. Religion can be used to discern, by observing the decorations and idols in her lair, that Glax is a pious servant of Bane. She respects others who respect her god. The goblin warchief also respects those who seem strong and bold, hence she pays heed to successful Intimidate checks. Insight can be used to gauge these facts, as well as to observe that the PCs on the road to failing the skill challenge can

gain victory by having one of the party members duel Glax’s bugbear warrior or Glax.

If the PCs suitably impress Glax with religious and warlike talk, by succeeding in the negotiation, she’s willing to send them on to Ziguarz. Her underboss guides the PCs deeper into the Bile Spider lair.

Combat Encounter: If PCs find they must fight Glax, 3rd- or 4th-level PCs discover she and her berserkers are fierce adversaries.

Glax’s Brute Squad (Level 5; 1,150 XP): Glax commands several dozen goblins and bugbears, but she keeps her favorites nearby at all times. Of these, Glax keeps the most able with her most hours of the day. She doesn’t trust Ziguarz enough to allow any his altered goblins into her personal force. Should any creature displease Glax, her ego demands nothing less than that creature’s quick and messy eradication.

- ◆ Glax, female goblin level 5 skullcleaver savage berserker (see template, *Dungeon Master’s Guide* 180)
- ◆ 2 goblin skullcleavers (level 3 brute)
- ◆ Bugbear warrior (level 5 brute)
- ◆ Bugbear strangler (level 6 lurker)

Combat with Glax and her brute squad is one of howling violence, goblin oaths of doom, and slaver-ing bloodshed. The brutes lay into the PCs from the outset. Glax and her servants might take minor actions to lick blood from her weapons and engage in other inhuman displays, including a savage coup de grace. They use *goblin tactics* to maneuver into flanking positions, until they become bloodied and totally lose it. Only the bugbear strangler is at all cautious, starting from hiding if she can and waiting until she has a choice target to *strangle* before engaging fully.

ZIGUARZ, BILE SPIDER KING

Ziguarz is a black-hearted and devious goblin who is drunk with accursed magic and newfound power. He’s vain, arrogant, and paranoid, and he’s willing to sacrifice any of his underlings for any purpose he

deems worthy. He's also willing to torture, maim, and kill to continue to expand his powers.

Social Encounter: Ziguarz is loud, depraved, fopish in a goblin way, pompous, and prone to random violence. He's willing to listen to flattery and accept bribes. The goblin alchemist is insane enough to believe that other evil forces might seek his aid.

If the characters made it this far peacefully by posing as emissaries, Ziguarz can be fooled into listening to them. By using Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Arcana to succeed on a level 4, complexity 4 negotiation, the PCs can pose as emissaries from another evil force. Intimidate checks result in automatic failures during this skill challenge, since Ziguarz considers himself above petty threats. By promising alliances and trade, the characters can pump Ziguarz for information on his plans and even be allowed to leave the Bile Spider Lair in amity.

During negotiations, PCs can discern through Insight that Ziguarz's main weakness is the arrogance formed during his dramatic rise to prominence among the Bile Spiders. This overconfidence has led him to allow his warriors and freed experiments to attract attention before the Bile Spider tribe is ready to face tough opposition. He dismisses suggestions that he should be more careful with an amused wave of his hand. Insight also quickly tells the characters that this is in part because Ziguarz's experiments

INSIDIOUS GOBLINS

Goblins are often depicted as pesky rabble, incompetent savages, and comic relief. Sinister goblins, maybe with a little black humor thrown in for spice, seem more fun to me, though. After all, a goblin murders, steal, and even engages in cannibalism if it has a reason to do so. It is devoted to dark spirits and evil gods, whom it serves out of fear. The terror and suffering of others is inconsequential, even desirable, to goblins as groups and individuals. A goblin takes what it can, from wealth to power.

Good examples of this type of goblin can be found in literature, movies, and Dungeons & Dragons. The goblins of *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* are great examples of evil and selfish goblin behavior, although one might use them as an example of hobgoblins as well. Although most of the goblins from the 1985 Ridley Scott film *Legend* were just goofy, the goblin Blix is a fine example of how the worst goblins should be—wicked, selfish, and grasping, but cowed by superior force. Monte Cook also introduced truly depraved goblins in the *Goblins of Ao-Rach in Book of Vile Darkness*. The Bile Spiders are direct descendants of Monte's degenerate goblins.

have made him unhinged, probably due to a mix of toxic agents he has accidentally ingested and unthinkable transformations he has witnessed.

Combat Encounter: If swords are drawn against Ziguarz, 3rd- or 4th-level PCs find they have a serious fight on their hands.

Mad Goblin Alchemist (Level 6; 1,475 XP): The mad goblin alchemist Ziguarz is not so mad as to go anywhere without his personal coterie of alchemically animated undead servitors. Moreover, Ziguarz has a few tricks of his own. The zombie hulk is the previous Bile Spider chieftain that Ziguarz supplanted, then reanimated and “improved” with his terrible alchemical knowledge.

- ◆ Ziguarz, male *altered* goblin level 6 hexer demagogue (see template, *Dungeon Master's Guide* 178)
- ◆ 1 goblin skullcleaver (level 3 brute)
- ◆ 1 clay scout (homunculus, level 2 lurker)
- ◆ 2 *altered* deathjump spiders (level 4 skirmisher)
- ◆ 1 *altered* zombie hulk (level 8 brute)

When a fight beckons, Ziguarz covers his allies and the PCs with a *vexing cloud*, then uses an action point to use *stinging hex*, *blinding hex*, or *alchemical breath*. The skull cleaver and zombie hulk hurl themselves at the PC party's front line. Deathjump spiders use *death from above* to deliver their deadly attacks.

Ziguarz tries to stay adjacent to his skullcleaver bodyguard, using *lead from the rear* to transfer damage to the skullcleaver. Once Ziguarz is bloodied, his *alchemical juggernaut* power comes into play. The goblin alchemist uses *clever escape* (a demagogue power) to escape when the battle turns sour. He believes that if he is struck down, he will return even stronger than before from one of his hidden alchemical crèches (maybe he's delusional, maybe not—it's up to you). 🌀

About the Authors

Chris Sims started out working for small d20 companies in 2003, then landed a freelance editor gig for Wizards RPG R&D. Wizards finally got annoyed enough by his constant applications to hire him as the *Duel Masters* editor in 2005. From there, Chris wheedled his way into RPG R&D as an editor, and finally became a story designer after masterminding a few choice assassinations. His credits include *Monster Manual V*, *Secrets of Sarlona*, *Rules Compendium*, and the *Eberron Survival Guide* (thanks, Logan!).

Bruce Cordell is a D&D designer, but during his twelve years in the game industry, he has dabbled in miniatures, board games, collectible card games, d20 games, and more. Bruce has over a sixty listed credits to his name, including the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, *Libris Mortis*, and *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*. His body of work also includes three published *Forgotten Realms* novels (*Lady of Poison*, *Darkvision*, and *Stardeep*), with more on the way.

Alchemical Juggernaut

Altered Utility

With the sound of breaking clay and a billow of bilious green smoke, you warp, your eyes smoke and then flare with an emerald flame, and your skin glistens with a green sheen.

Daily ◆ **Acid, Arcane, Polymorph**
Minor Action Personal

Effect: You can spend a healing surge and gain regeneration 5. Until the end of the encounter, all of your attacks deal extra acid damage equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum 1).



Face of the Moon

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 16-18

By John “Ross” Rossomangno

Illustrations by Eric Belisle and Miles Johnston

Cartography by Jason A Engle

When the characters step through a portal created by a strange illithid device, they are transported into the heart of a devious plot. Using the technology of a lost race, the mind flayers are creating duplicates of prominent rulers and influential people to advance their nefarious agenda. Only the adventurers can put a stop to the illithids' dark plot. The heroes must contend not only with the formidable intellect of their foes, but also the bizarre environment in which they find themselves.

BACKGROUND

When a team of illithids eliminated a surface-dwelling scholar famous for his study of aberrant creatures, they scoured his laboratory and destroyed his research. Among his curiosities, they discovered the preserved body of one of their kind, along with a strange device. A psychic dissection of the dead illithid's brain unraveled a bizarre tale.

In its travels across the planes, this creature stumbled upon a remote place. Although the mind flayer was eventually slain and its corpse sold to the eccentric

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scholar, the mind flayer's brain held all the knowledge that the creature had gathered, including the memory of a stranded ship belonging to a forgotten race.

The illithids that recovered the body set about studying these memories, combining them with their knowledge of celestial mechanics to chart a portion of the lost vessel's course. They discerned that their own world's moon was once a port of call for other vessels of this lost race.

Meanwhile, other mind flayers studied the device found with the dead illithid. Despite its lack of arcane or psionic energy, this object seemed able to manipulate reality. The mind flayers devoted great resources to unlocking its mysteries and eventually discovered how the device could open a portal, beyond which stood a citadel of the lost race, filled with other potent devices.

A pod of illithids and their thralls, led by an elder brain, crossed over to the citadel to continue their studies. After sealing the portal behind them so that no one could interfere, they spent years in isolation.

Inside the Lunar Citadel, as the illithids came to call it, a vast chamber housed a machine capable of reproducing organisms from sample material. Initially, the illithids hoped this place would provide them with a limitless source of food, but the brains of the cloned creatures yielded neither sustenance nor nuanced taste. These vacant minds proved vulnerable to manipulation, and the vessels that housed them sometimes were indistinguishable from the donor material that created them.

And so was born a devious and far-reaching plan. When the portals to the world were reopened, a subtle campaign of abduction and substitution began.

Ythrilnaw

While the mind flayers' elder brain devotes itself to overseeing the infiltration of the world's power structures, the ulitharid named Ythrilnaw controls the operations of the Lunar Citadel. Ythrilnaw's dark intellect surpasses the cunning of a typical mind flayer.

Deferring only to the will of the elder brain, Ythrilnaw sees the devices found in the Lunar Citadel as tools to further subjugate the natural world.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins when the party encounters a slain illithid bearing a strange device. This object opens a portal to the Lunar Citadel, the base of operations for the mind flayers.

After the adventurers pass through the portal, it closes behind them, and they are set upon by the servants of the mind flayers. The disturbance alerts the mind flayer Ythrilnaw, which appears to the characters through the base's communication system. The ulitharid informs the characters that escape is impossible, since it holds the only other portal-summoning device presently in the base. Ythrilnaw then activates the area's defenses.

When the characters emerge from the transit area, they enter the housing module of the lost race, which has been converted to quarters for the mind flayers' thralls. Windows in these chambers reveal that the characters have traveled to the moon. They might also discover Kelm Semersted, a prisoner whose tale reveals clues regarding the mind flayers' plans.

When the characters tangle with a horde of grimlock thralls, they draw Ythrilnaw's attention anew, and the mind flayer sends reinforcements to deal with the party. These enemies search for the characters while another mind flayer continues its medical experiments in a nearby laboratory. Defeating either group enables the party to enter the sanctum of Ythrilnaw and the elder brain.

Involving the Characters

The most direct means of involving the characters in the adventure is placing the dead mind flayer in their path, as discussed in the opening event.

NO MOON?

For campaign settings that have no moon, this adventure can be set on a "wandering star" periodically observed in the night sky. This celestial body is a satellite that the lost race placed in orbit. In this case, remove references to the rocky surface in the read-aloud text, instead describing the citadel as hanging suspended in the darkness above the world's surface. Assume that gravity is provided through unseen technological means.

For campaign settings with more than one moon (such as Eberron), choose which moon the illithids' base is on. Adjust the read-aloud text as required.

Additionally, in previous adventures, you could have had secondary characters familiar to the adventurers begin acting in a strange fashion. This foreshadowing can sow the seeds of paranoia for when the truth of the mind flayer plan is discovered.

Other possibilities include the following.

- ◆ After the adventurers suffered a defeat and were captured, their captors sell them to the mind flayers to be cloned and returned. The characters awaken in area 1A after a portal malfunction kills their captors.
- ◆ A raving mad version of a friend or patron confronts the adventurers while they are speaking to a real version of the same person. The double carries a transit beacon, and madness prevents him or her from providing any useful aid or information.
- ◆ A duchess is certain that her husband has undergone subtle changes to his personality, despite a lack of physical evidence. Searching the duke's chambers locates the beacon.

Treasure

This adventure contains treasure appropriate for 17th-level characters. On the citadel, the characters can find technological devices that function as magic items. Some of these items are delineated in the “Lost Race Devices” section, pages 25–26. Others come from Dave Chalker’s article “Bazaar of the Bizarre: Thingamajigs of the Barrier Peaks,” which appears in *Dragon* 410. Items from the article are denoted with a superscript “T”.

All technological items require the characters to figure out how they work. See the “Lost Race Devices” section for more information.

Souvenirs

You have to decide if it’s fitting for your campaign for the technology in this adventure to continue to function once it leaves the citadel. Nonconsumable items might draw their power from the citadel’s energy grid. A *nautiloid* could rely on elements in the citadel’s atmosphere to survive. Once removed from the citadel, such items cease functioning after a time you think is appropriate (perhaps 2d6 days).

If you decide this is true, you have two tasks. First, you need to place magic items on the citadel so the party gains the right amount of items for an adventure that will result in advancement of one level. (These items fit best in areas that already contain treasure.) Second, to make up the monetary shortfall in this adventure, permit the characters to sell nonfunctional items and *nautiloid* shells to scholars or collectors of the bizarre. The items fetch one-fifth their normal value from such a buyer.

ONE OF US

To draw attention to the insidious nature of the illithid plot prior to the party’s return home, consider asking one of the players to run his or her character as a secret mind flayer clone. Meet with the player prior to running this adventure, explaining that his or her character has become a mind flayer agent, and is secretly working to ensure that the rest of the party members are delivered to Ythril naw. The player can play this role as he or she chooses, until revealed. Before or after the reveal, the real character shows up after escaping from imprisonment. If this event occurs before the reveal, each version of the character struggles to prove that he or she is not the illithid agent—a great exercise in pure roleplaying.

OPENING EVENT

The characters discover the corpse of a mind flayer that met with a grisly end. If the mind flayer appears in a location the characters consider to be secure, the discovery can add tension.

When the characters discover the corpse, read:

Ichor spreads across the floor between pieces of a dismembered humanoid. Lifeless tentacles hanging from its head identify the remains as those of a mind flayer. Rubbery violet skin covers the creature’s spindly limbs, and its fingers are wrapped around a dull black object.

Characters can make Dungeoneering checks to determine what they know about mind flayers.

Heal DC 16: The mind flayer perished only a moment or two ago. The cause of the creature’s dismemberment is unclear.

Transit Beacon

The device carried by the mind flayer is a transit beacon, which opens portals to the Lunar Citadel. This beacon is impervious to damage.

When the characters examine the device, read:

The object the mind flayer holds is a cylinder that you can hold in one hand. A brass stud is set in one end of the cylinder. The other end occasionally winks with a vibrant green glow, between which the object emits short, chirping tones.

Depressing the stud generates a shimmering silver portal in a random unoccupied square adjacent to the character holding the beacon. The portal reflects a distorted image of the area around its far side, and it emits a soft sizzling sound. It remains for 1 minute before closing. Stepping into the portal or inserting an appendage or a held object into the portal causes a character to be yanked into the shimmering disc. Objects thrown at the portal vanish similarly.

Creatures and objects that enter the portal appear in area 1A.

If no character or object enters the portal for 1 minute, or if a character fails to push the button within 5 minutes of finding the transit beacon, the beacon goes silent and stops emitting light for a few hours. It then resumes beeping and flashing for 5 minutes, continuing this pattern.

Conclusion

Ythril naw sent the now-dead mind flayer as a scout to locate another victim. The illithids do not yet fully understand the portals, occasionally resulting in accidents such as this one. When the scout does not return after 24 hours, Ythril naw sends a team to determine what became of it. In this event, the mind flayer unseen and the grimlocks from area 5 appear in the midst of the party and attack. They attempt to take as many prisoners as possible before returning through the portal.

LUNAR CITADEL

The base known to the illithids as the Lunar Citadel was created by a lost race that held dominion over numerous worlds. It served as a way point, at which clones of the lost race were produced. Using their ships, the clones created here would colonize more worlds for the lost race. (The reasons for the waning population and ultimate disappearance of the lost race are left to you.)

Creatures reach the Lunar Citadel by using the transit system of the lost race, a technology that enables the creation of portals similar to those used by planar travelers. These portals exit in the basement of the transit and administrative building that housed the crew of the base. The building is now home to the illithids' thralls.

By way of two enclosed walkways, this building connects to a two-story research lab and the cloning center that Ythrilnaw now operates. A short passage links these two structures, enabling the mind flayers and their thralls to move quickly through the citadel.

Features of the Citadel

The lost race employed technology unlike any the world has seen. A number of the citadel's general features, described below, are devices of this sort.

Dimensional Lock: Hidden machinery dampens extradimensional travel inside the base, preventing occupants from mistakenly teleporting themselves outside. Other than portals created through technological means such as the transit beacon, ritual portal magic (including Planar Portal) fails to function. A character trained in Arcana can sense this effect.

Doors: Door panels slide into adjacent walls. Unless otherwise noted, a door opens when a creature pushes on it as a free action. It closes again at the end of the opening creature's next turn. An open door can be closed with a minor action by touching a glowing orb that appears on either side of the doorway.

A door can be forced open by using a lever and a DC 31 Athletics check. A door can also be attacked and destroyed (AC/Reflex 10, Fortitude 21; immune to fire, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; hp 120).

Grav Tubes: These hollow pillars have archways cut into either side. They are made of an unbreakable clear material and provide access to other levels of the base by swiftly moving creatures up or down. Unattended objects placed in a tube float in place.

After stepping into a tube, a creature that indicates up or down (a free action) is conveyed one level in the indicated direction. This travel counts as 1 square of movement. Any creature that ends its turn in a tube is pushed into the floor area of the adjacent level. If an object or a creature blocks a tube, or a tube is sealed, the tube does not convey creatures in the direction of the blockage.

Nonfunctional tubes are treated as pits. A character can climb up or down a nonfunctional tube with DC 25 Athletics checks.

Metal hatches can seal tubes between floors. Control panels control such hatches as if they were doors.

Illumination: Light throughout the complex emanates from glowing panels set in the ceiling every 10 to 20 feet. Each panel sheds bright light for 10 squares. Any attack against a panel destroys it, potentially changing the lighting in an area. The default light level is described in each area.

Language: The piping tones of the lost race's language are sometimes outside the range of normal humanoid hearing. Some creatures, particularly beasts, find hearing the tones uncomfortable. The written form of the language is patterns of interlocking triangles arranged at varying angles.

If a character can understand the language of the lost race, he or she gains a +4 bonus to interact with the race's technology. In addition, such a character can make use of written information such as hallway directions and room labels.

Observation Spheres: Black spheres near the ceiling in every area enable Ythrilnaw to monitor the citadel from the control panel in area 10. The ulitharid can make Perception checks to see and hear into any area of the complex (Stealth DC 25 to avoid Ythrilnaw's scrutiny). The spheres do not allow the use of darkvision through them.

Where control panels permit the operation of certain spheres, the adventurers can view the rooms in an encounter area through the spheres or can turn the spheres off.

The ulitharid can also use the spheres to project its image and communicate with the party. It relishes tormenting the characters because it rarely interacts with creatures from the world. When Ythrilnaw uses this ability, the black sphere in the area glows slightly (Perception DC 31 to notice).

Destroying, deactivating, or covering a sphere prevents anyone from monitoring its room. Each sphere can be attacked (AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; immune to fire, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; vulnerable 10 lightning; hp 25). Ythrilnaw does not have the means to repair spheres that are destroyed.

Walls: The walls are constructed of smooth metal panels that are impossible to climb with Athletics checks.

Windows: The complex is dotted with windows revealing the lunar landscape beyond the base. Smaller windows provide a narrow view of the rocky surface of the moon. Larger windows, such as those in the garden (5B), reveal the adventurers' planet below and indicate how far the portal has transported the party. Windows are impervious to damage.

The first time a character looks outside, read:

The landscape beyond this citadel is a rock-strewn wasteland. A remarkably clear night sky is visible, although the constellations appear in unfamiliar locations. An odd orb of blue, green, and white has replaced the moon.

Control Panels

Control panels scattered throughout the citadel operate and manage its systems.

A character must be adjacent to a control panel to discern its function or operate it. A character attempting to use a panel makes a skill check or an ability check, modified by you according to the player's description of what his or her character is doing.

Panels in the same area are linked, so that lighting and doors in that area can be controlled from multiple locations.

Operating Cues: When operated, a panel emits auditory cues in the language of the lost race. These vocalizations are audible to anyone nearby. A character who has previously used a control panel successfully or who understands the language of the lost race gains a +4 bonus to Intelligence checks and skill checks made to discern a panel's function, operate its controls, or destroy the control panel.

Discern Function: Intelligence DC 17 (standard action). *Success:* The character understands one of the panel's functions and can attempt the operate controls action (see the entry below) to use that function. *Failure (12 or lower):* The character cannot attempt the operate controls action on this panel. *Special:* If a character has discerned a specific panel function, he or she can use the same function on any panel that performs that function without having to make checks.

Operate Controls: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have discerned the function he or she wishes to perform. *Success:* The character causes the panel to perform the intended function. Default controls are described below. Some control panels have additional functions detailed in an area's description.

Destroy: Athletics or Thievery DC 31 (standard action). *Success:* The panel is rendered inoperable, and the controls are locked to their current settings. *Failure (26 or lower):* Any creature adjacent to the panel takes 10 lightning damage.

TECH APPEARANCE

Though the players might guess the identity of the technological devices they encounter, their characters should be entirely unfamiliar with high technology. Describe the citadel in terms the characters, rather than the players, understand. For example, Ythrillnaw's projection is not a hologram, but a flickering illusion or apparition.

A panel can also be attacked (AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; immune to fire, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; vulnerable 10 lightning; hp 100). Whenever a panel takes damage, any creature adjacent to the panel takes 10 lightning damage.

Functions: All control panels feature the following default functions.

Lighting: Any or all lights in the area linked to the panel can be set to bright, dim, or none.

Doors: All doors, hatches, and grav tubes in the area linked to the panel can be opened, closed, or locked.

Query: A display provides a visual demonstration of the use of a technological item in the character's possession.

Use by Illithids: Because the mind flayers here already know about the control panels, they don't make checks involving them, and need only to take a standard action to use a panel's function.

ADMINISTRATION CENTER

The lowest level of the complex contains the transit machinery of the lost race. The illithids use it to travel to the world, abduct their victims, and then return indoctrinated clones. The illithids' derro servants also

lair here. This is where the party appears after using the portal in the opening event.

Grav tubes permit access between levels. Corridors on the second level lead to the laboratory (area 7) and the cloning center (area 9).

1. Transit Area

Combat Encounter Level 16 **7,900 XP**

When the adventurers arrive, they surprise the derros lurking here, though the sound of combat alerts the other creatures in the area. When the defenders are defeated, the characters can begin to assess their strange surroundings.

Light: Dim light.

Monsters: 1 derro savant, 1 derro ironguard, 10 derro thugs, 2 warped slaves.

When the characters arrive, read:

An intense feeling of motion subsides as shimmering colors dissolve around you, revealing a dimly lit chamber with smooth metal walls. An archway opens into a larger space. Within that space, a flight of stairs leads up to a platform where brass cabinets emit a low hum and glimmer with lighted runes.

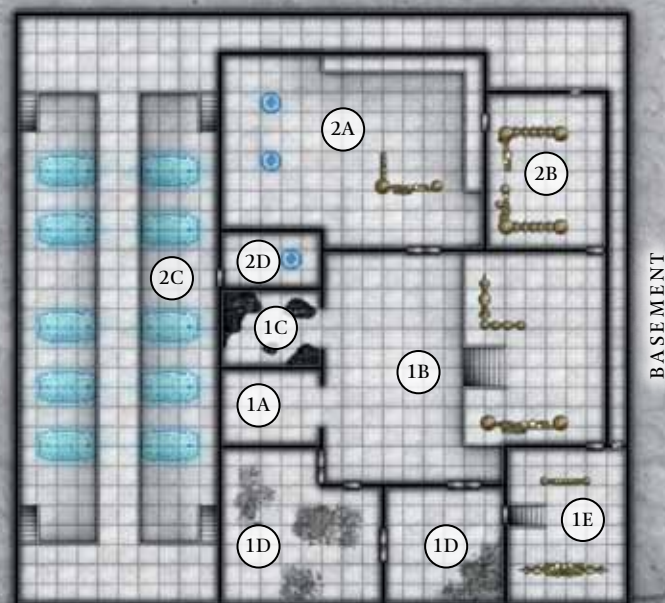
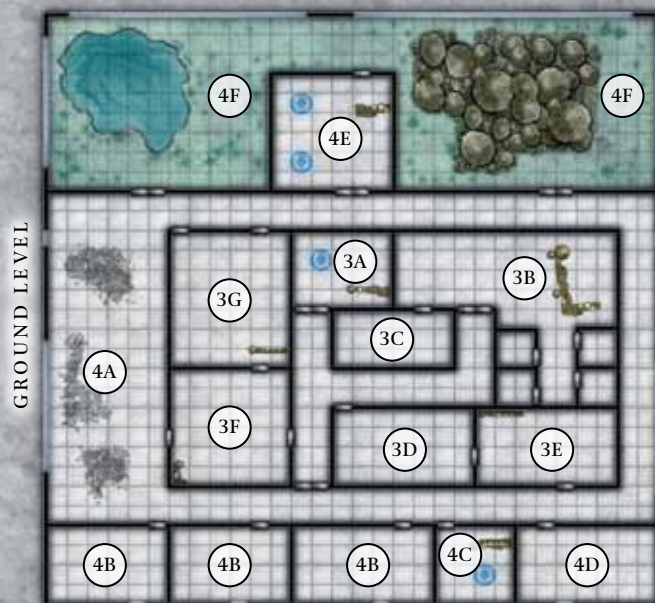
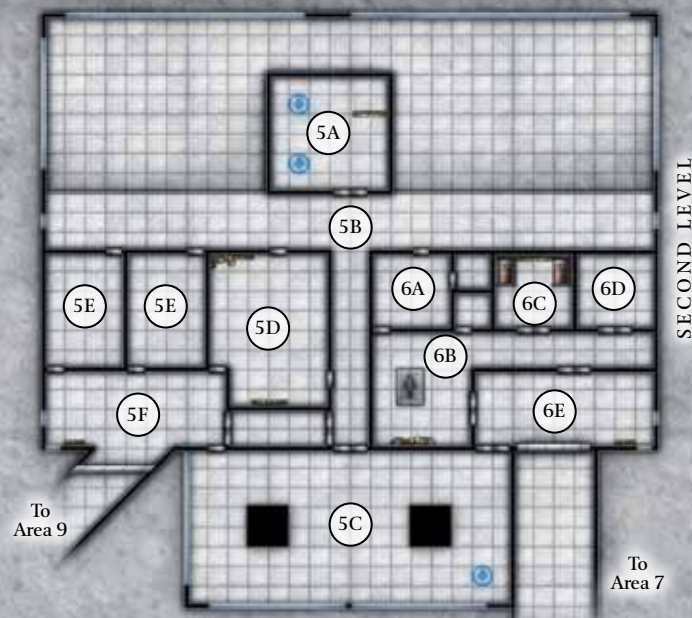
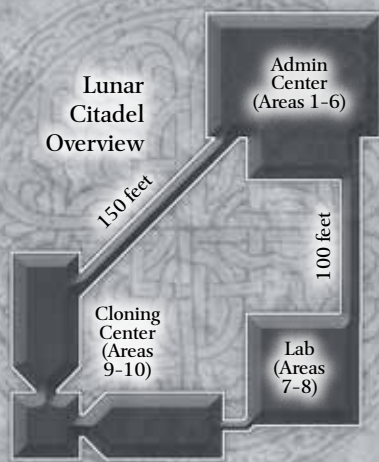
Six short gray-skinned humanoids stand as if fascinated, staring at the cabinets with glassy white eyes. One of them possesses an elongated device that resembles an armless steel crossbow with two handles, but which is held like a staff. Blue energy occasionally shimmers across the device, while multicolored studs periodically rise, then recede from its surface.

The derro savant and five thugs are watching the lights of the control panel. Unless the characters threw more than a couple of objects through the portal, the derros are not expecting the sudden appearance of enemies in the transit room (1A). The characters surprise the monsters in the control room (1B) unless they hesitate in attacking.

When battle is joined, the noise of combat quickly draws the derro ironguard, the remaining derro thugs,

Administration Center

One square = 5 feet





and the warped slaves from the workshops (1D). They arrive at the start of the second round.

Treasure: The derro savant carries a *portal gun*, but the creature is unfamiliar with its true function. Instead, the derro treats it as a staff and a badge of leadership.

1A. Transit Room. This bare room permits travel to and from the world below. The floor is a sheet of strange polished metal. When the control panels in area 1B open a portal, it appears here.

1B. Control Room. The ceiling here is 20 feet above the floor and the stairs lead 10 feet up to the platform. The control panels hum with energy and are covered with glowing runes that hover above each panel's surface. An image of the characters' departure point in the world flickers among the runes.

In addition to their default functions, the control panels here control the transit system. A character can discern the following additional function for these panels.

Open Portal: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function and must possess a working transit beacon. *Success:* A new portal opens in area 1A, leading to the characters' point of origin. *Failure (12 or lower):* A new portal opens to an unexpected location (as determined by you).

1C. Damaged Transit Room. The illithids sought to better understand this room by taking it apart. As a result, it no longer functions. The floor is torn up, leaving gaps exposing small metal tubes and crystalline objects. Unlike the other machinery found throughout the Lunar Citadel, these clearly damaged objects do not glow or hum.

All squares in this room are difficult terrain.

1D. Workshops. These rooms held spare parts and repair equipment. Some tools bear a resemblance to a blacksmith's implements, though they seem overly delicate and there is no sign of a forge. The most interesting devices were removed by the mind flayers for study, and the derros now lair here. Searching the area locates a *greater sleep grenade* that has gone unnoticed.

The remaining derro thugs and warped slaves are in these two rooms. If they hear sounds of combat from the control room, they move to investigate.

Debris here is difficult terrain.

1E. Engineering Center. This room was used to monitor the generator room (2C), but the controls have been secured against tampering. The illithids have not mastered the power generated by the crystal-line towers.

In addition to their default functions, the control panels here permit operation of nearby observation spheres. A character can discern the following additional function for these panels.

Observe: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* The character can activate observation spheres to view any section of area 1 and area 2.

Secret Door: This door is a panel flush with the wall (DC 23 Perception check to find). A concealed button beside it activates it.

10 Derro Thugs		Level 14 Minion Brute	
Small natural humanoid		XP 250 each	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +9	
AC 26, Fortitude 25, Reflex 24, Will 25		Perception +5	
Speed 5		Darkvision	
STANDARD ACTIONS			
Ⓢ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC			
Hit: 14 damage.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
Mad Sacrifice ♦ Encounter			
Trigger: The thug misses with an attack.			
Effect (Free Action): The attack instead hits, and the thug drops to 0 hit points.			
Str 13 (+8)	Dex 14 (+9)	Wis 6 (+5)	
Con 18 (+11)	Int 8 (+6)	Cha 16 (+10)	
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment leather armor, light shield, club			

Derro Savant	Level 16 Controller
Small natural humanoid	XP 1,400
HP 154; Bloodied 77	Initiative +10
AC 30, Fortitude 27, Reflex 28, Will 29	Perception +6
Speed 5, teleport 3	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Scourge (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 11 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the savant's next turn.	
🧠 Mind Scourge (implement, psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +19 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d6 + 8 psychic damage, and the target chooses either to take ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends) or be dazed (save ends).	
Window to Madness (implement, psychic, zone) ♦ Recharge when this power's zone ends	
Effect: The savant creates a zone in an area burst 1 within 10 squares centered on an ally. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter. A nonderro that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 10 psychic damage. The savant can end the zone as a minor action.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Dance of Madness ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The savant slides each creature within the zone created by <i>window to madness</i> 2 squares.	
FREE ACTIONS	
Strength of Madness ♦ Encounter	
Requirement: The savant can use <i>strength of madness</i> only during its turn.	
Effect: Roll a d6 and add the result as a power bonus to the savant's attack rolls until the end of its next turn. In addition, the savant grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Arcana +18	
Str 9 (+7)	Dex 14 (+10) Wis 6 (+6)
Con 18 (+12)	Int 21 (+13) Cha 23 (+14)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 10	
Equipment scourge, orb	

Derro Ironguard	Level 15 Soldier
Small natural humanoid	XP 1,200
HP 150; Bloodied 75	Initiative +9
AC 31, Fortitude 27, Reflex 24, Will 27	Perception +5
Speed 5	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage, or 3d8 + 15 against prone targets.	
⚔ Hooking Jab (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The ironguard must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, or 2d8 + 10 against prone targets, and the target is grabbed.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⚔ Unbalancing Thrust (weapon) ♦ At-Will (1/round)	
Requirement: The ironguard must be wielding a spear.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the ironguard); +20 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The target falls prone.	
FREE ACTIONS	
Strength of Madness ♦ Encounter	
Requirement: The ironguard can use <i>strength of madness</i> only during its turn.	
Effect: Roll a d6 and add the result as a power bonus to the ironguard's attack rolls until the end of its next turn. In addition, the ironguard grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Intimidate +17, Thievery +12	
Str 17 (+10)	Dex 10 (+7) Wis 6 (+5)
Con 22 (+13)	Int 15 (+9) Cha 20 (+12)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment scale armor, spear	

2 Warped Slaves	Level 16 Brute
Large aberrant humanoid	XP 1,400 each
HP 193; Bloodied 96	Initiative +11
AC 28, Fortitude 29, Reflex 26, Will 29	Perception +7
Speed 6 (can't shift)	Darkvision
TRAITS	
Disintegrating Mind (psychic) ♦ Aura 1	
Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 5 psychic damage. Whenever a derro within the aura uses <i>strength of madness</i> , the warped slave can use <i>tentacle</i> as a free action.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Bite ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d12 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Tentacle ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d12 + 6 damage, and the warped slave grabs the target. The warped slave then pulls the target 1 square.	
⚔ Flailing Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The warped slave must be bloodied.	
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in burst); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 6 damage, and the warped slave pulls the target 1 square.	
Str 18 (+12)	Dex 16 (+11) Wis 8 (+7)
Con 23 (+14)	Int 4 (+5) Cha 23 (+14)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	

Tactics: The derro savant uses *window to madness* on thugs in the midst of enemies, following up with *dance of madness* to move thugs into position to gain combat advantage. It then uses *mind scourge* while remaining behind its allies.

The ironguard defends the savant, focusing attacks on characters who try to engage the savant in melee.

Warped slaves use their *tentacle* power to draw foes into their aura and closer to the ironguard and thugs. They know to avoid the savant's *window to madness* zone.

The derros are thralls of the illithids, turning their race's typical madness into fanaticism. Even faced with overwhelming force, they do not retreat.

If the characters retreat, the derros contain them while awaiting guidance from Ythrilnaw. The ulitharid sends the creatures from area 2 to aid the monsters

here. After the creatures from area 2 arrive, including the rakshasas, the combined force attacks and attempts to take captives for cloning.

Conclusion

Captives: If captured, the derros cackle madly and shout, “Wait till you see the sky!” They have no understanding of how the devices here operate, but they are aware of the secret door in area 1E.

Transit Beacon Burnout: When it is returned to the Lunar Citadel, the malfunctioning transit beacon that the characters recovered in the opening event burns out. This safety feature is intended to prevent a faulty beacon from being used.

After 5 minutes, or if the characters try to open another portal, the beacon emits a wavering, high-pitched tone. The device smokes and hisses, then falls silent and ceases to glow.

In conjunction with the controls in area 1B, a transit beacon enables creatures to come and go from the Lunar Citadel. Unless they obtain a new beacon, the characters are marooned. A character who discerns the “open portal” function for the panels in area 1B understands the party’s predicament.

2. Access Center

Combat Encounter Level 17 9,700 XP

Ythrilnaw takes note of the party’s arrival, thanks to the observation spheres. The ulitharid addresses the characters when they enter the access hall (2A), locks the doors to area 1B, and orders a pair of rakshasas to lead derros from area 2C against the intruders. See the Tactics section for more information.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: 2 rakhasa archers, 2 derro harvesters, 2 derro ironguards, 10 derro thugs.

When the characters enter area 2A, read:

This large chamber houses a humming, glowing cabinet similar to those in the area of your arrival. An elevated walkway with a railing is suspended in one corner of the room. Two illuminated columns of blue glass reach from the floor to the ceiling at one end of the chamber, with a pair of openings in each one.

An eight-foot tall spectral humanoid stands in the center of the room, hovering several inches above the floor. Six tentacles dangle from its bulbous head, reaching to below its waist. Its hollow voice seems to emerge from the ceiling above it.

“At least your ignorance has left the portal undamaged. The broken beacon is of little consequence. In fact, it ensures you will be staying. I would prefer to have you to dinner, but I am afraid I can take no chances. The plan cannot be revealed before its time.”

The dim light shifts from white to red, and the glowing columns go dark.

Passive Perception DC 16: The character sees a device clutched in one of the mind flayer’s tentacles, recognizing it as a transit beacon like the one that brought the party here.

Dungeoneering DC 31: The character identifies Ythrilnaw as an ulitharid, a powerful mind flayer revered by others of its kind.

If the characters bypass area 2A, Ythrilnaw addresses them through an observation sphere elsewhere.

2A. Access Hall. This room provides access to the personnel quarters and formerly served as a check-point, monitoring the use of the transit portals. The ceiling here is 20 feet high, and the elevated walkway is 10 feet above the floor.

Grav Tubes: These tubes, which lead to area 4E, have been sealed by Ythrilnaw. Characters can use the control panel here to unseal them and unlock the door to area 1B.

2B. Guard Post. Guards used to monitor the access hall from here. Ythrilnaw uses its own control panel to handle those functions now.

In addition to their default functions, the control panels here can also access observation spheres to show areas 1–5. A character can discern the observe function (see area 1E, page 7) for these panels.

Secret Door: This door is a panel flush with the wall (DC 23 Perception check to find). A concealed button beside it activates it.

2C. Generator Room. The floor of this room is 30 feet below the walkway that bisects the room. The ceiling rises 10 feet above the walkway.

Crystalline Machinery: The carved crystalline machines that power the transit system shimmer with pale blue light and emit a humming sound. The force they channel has the side effect of magnifying ambient energy in the area. Whenever a creature adjacent to one or more machines takes untyped damage, that creature takes 5 extra damage.

Attacking a machine causes a backlash that deals 20 lightning damage to the attacker. The machine then stops glowing and humming and ceases functioning for 1 hour. If half or more of the pillars are disabled, the transit system does not work.

Stairways: The steep stairs down to the floor are difficult terrain. A creature can ignore the difficult terrain by succeeding on a DC 23 Acrobatics check.

2D. Emergency Access. This plain room features a single grav tube leading up to area 3A. Because it is for emergency use, it cannot be sealed.

2 Rakshasa Archers	Level 15 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,200 each
HP 110; Bloodied 55	Initiative +12
AC 28, Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 25	Perception +16
Speed 6	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Claw ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
🏹 Longbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +22 vs. AC. The rakshasa makes two attack rolls and uses either result.	
Hit: 1d10 + 9 damage.	
🔪 Double Attack ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The rakshasa uses longbow twice, making each attack against a different target.	
🔪 Ghost Arrow (necrotic, weapon) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +20 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 18 necrotic damage, and the target cannot spend healing surges (save ends).	
MINOR ACTIONS	
👁 Deceptive Veil (illusion) ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The rakshasa disguises itself to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses <i>deceptive veil</i> again or until it drops to 0 hit points. Other creatures can make a DC 35 Insight check to discern that the form is an illusion.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
🌀 Illusory Escape (illusion) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Trigger: An enemy makes a ranged attack against the rakshasa.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The rakshasa becomes invisible, and an illusion of it appears in its square. The transition is indiscernible to observers, and the illusion lasts until the start of the rakshasa's next turn or until a creature attacks the illusion. After the illusion appears, the rakshasa shifts up to its speed.	
Str 17 (+10)	Dex 20 (+12)
Con 14 (+9)	Int 12 (+8)
Wis 18 (+11)	Cha 14 (+9)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common	
Equipment longbow, 20 arrows	

2 Derro Harvesters	Level 15 Lurker
Small natural humanoid	XP 1,200 each
HP 116; Bloodied 58	Initiative +17
AC 30, Fortitude 27, Reflex 28, Will 26	Perception +10
Speed 6	Darkvision
TRAITS	
Combat Advantage	
The harvester deals 2d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ War Pick (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage.	
🔪 Harvest (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The harvester must have started its turn hidden from the target.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The target falls unconscious (save ends).	
👤 Flee to the Shadows ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The harvester moves its speed. If it has concealment at the end of its move, it can attempt a Stealth check to become hidden.	
Life in Chains ♦ Encounter	
Requirement: The harvester must be holding shackles.	
Effect: The harvester shackles one Medium or smaller helpless creature that is adjacent to it until the creature succeeds at using the escape action against the harvester. While shackled, the creature is restrained. In addition, it falls prone whenever it is hit by a melee attack.	
FREE ACTIONS	
Strength of Madness ♦ Encounter	
Requirement: The harvester can use <i>strength of madness</i> only during its turn.	
Effect: Roll a d6 and add the result as a power bonus to the harvester's attack rolls until the end of its next turn. In addition, the harvester grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Stealth +18	
Str 10 (+7)	Dex 22 (+13)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 11 (+7)
	Wis 6 (+5)
	Cha 17 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment leather armor, war pick, 1 set of shackles	

2 Derro Ironguards	Level 15 Soldier
Small natural humanoid	XP 1,200 each
HP 150; Bloodied 75	Initiative +9
AC 31, Fortitude 27, Reflex 24, Will 27	Perception +5
Speed 5	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage, or 3d8 + 15 against prone targets.	
🔪 Hooking Jab (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The ironguard must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, or 2d8 + 10 against prone targets, and the target is grabbed.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
🔪 Unbalancing Thrust (weapon) ♦ At-Will (1/round)	
Requirement: The ironguard must be wielding a spear.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the ironguard); +20 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The target falls prone.	
FREE ACTIONS	
Strength of Madness ♦ Encounter	
Requirement: The ironguard can use <i>strength of madness</i> only during its turn.	
Effect: Roll a d6 and add the result as a power bonus to the ironguard's attack rolls until the end of its next turn. In addition, the ironguard grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Intimidate +17, Thievery +12	
Str 17 (+10)	Dex 10 (+7)
Con 22 (+13)	Int 15 (+9)
	Wis 6 (+5)
	Cha 20 (+12)
Alignment chaotic evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment scale armor, spear	

10 Derro Thugs	Level 14 Minion Brute
Small natural humanoid	XP 250 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +9
AC 26, Fortitude 25, Reflex 24, Will 25	Perception +5
Speed 5	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
④ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 14 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Mad Sacrifice ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The thug misses with an attack.	
Effect (Free Action): The attack instead hits, and the thug drops to 0 hit points.	
Str 13 (+8)	Dex 14 (+9)
Con 18 (+11)	Int 8 (+6)
	Wis 6 (+5)
	Cha 16 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment leather armor, light shield, club	

Tactics: Ythrilnaw has ordered two rakshasas to enter the area through the emergency access grav tube (area 2D). Leading one derro harvester, one derro ironguard, and five derro thugs from area 2C, they move into area 2B. From there, the derros move into area 1B, attacking from the doorway into area 2A. When the derros engage the characters, the rakshasas move onto the walkway above area 2A to snipe at the adventurers.

The derros fight to the death. The rakshasas retreat when all the derros are slain or the rakshasas are both bloodied. If they flee, the rakshasas return to area 2C and the remaining derros, hoping to exploit the effect of the crystalline machinery during combat. In area 2C, the rakshasas take up positions on the upper walkway.

3. Central Functions

Exploration Encounter

The core of the ground floor presents several areas for the party to explore and gain information regarding the illithid plot. The education center provides a look at the indoctrination process, and finding the prisoner Kelm Semersted in the security center exposes the full horror of the mind flayers' plots.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: Kelm Semersted.

Illithids are found in this area only when a new victim has been brought from the world or when a clone is being prepared for its return. Rakshasas come here to sleep or to give food to Kelm. Otherwise, the area sees little activity.

At your option, loud noise in this area can cause the creatures from area 4 to investigate.

3A. Emergency Access. This grav tube provides access to area 2D. Because it is for emergency use, it cannot be sealed. The control panel here cannot affect doors in areas 3B and 3C.

3B. Security Center. The four cells that are part of this room are used to hold abductees while the mind flayers create viable clones. When the illithids are satisfied with a clone, the prisoner becomes food for the mind flayers.

The control panel here is the only way to open the doors to the cells and the armory (area 3C). Equipment lockers in the armory can also be unlocked here. The panel can access observation spheres to show areas 1-5. A character can discern the observe function (see area 1E, page 7) for the panel.

Kelm Semersted: An infamous spymaster heading a guild with widespread influence, the human male Kelm Semersted is imprisoned in one of the cells. (At your discretion, you can use a different minor character here instead of Kelm. See the "Familiar Faces" sidebar, page 12).

Charming and ruthless, Kelm was valued as an ally and feared as a foe. But the guild master has been thoroughly broken by his ordeal here. His last memory of the world was sneaking into an arcanist's study. After that, he recalls being taken under guard to a place where the illithids forced him into a metal coffin. He talks of standing face to face with himself as the illithids compared him to his clones, and of being forced to watch while the mind flayers dissected faulty clones.

Kelm begs to be allowed to accompany the characters, hoping they can lead him to an exit. He is unaware that he is currently on the moon. He flees from combat unless faced with a mind flayer, in which case he is paralyzed with fear.

3C. Armory. Cases made of unbreakable clear material contain racks housing strange devices. The illithids have removed many items for study, but several remain locked in the cases. The cases can be unlocked using the control panel in the security center (area 3B). The lockers contain two *greater sleep grenades* and a level 20 *laser pistol*^T.

3D. Officers' Lounge. Small tables and large, comfortable chairs fill this room. On a shelf are six unbreakable crystal bottles containing a variety of exotic liquors (500 gp for each crystal bottle, plus 50 gp for the liquor).

A successful attempt to discern the function of the panel reveals that it is damaged. If tampered with, the panel causes keening music to emanate from the ceiling, drawing the attention of the grimlocks (area 4A).

3E. Officers' Quarters. This well-maintained room serves as the quarters for the rakshasas. A long-bow and several quivers of arrows are stored here. Three bunks have been slept in recently, indicating the presence of a third rakshasa.

The control panel here has default functions.

3F. Artifact Museum. Sealed cabinets display objects the lost race encountered on other worlds. The

illithids have made use of several of the cases to preserve items.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel here also opens the cases (use the default mechanic for opening doors). Additionally, the panel can activate a crystalline table that displays a map of the world. A character can discern the following additional function for the panel.

Display Map: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* The crystalline table glows pale green as an image of the world shimmers into view along its surface. The image transitions quickly, showing changes in land and settlements across the face of the planet. (You can use this effect to drop hints and create adventure hooks, allowing moderate or hard History checks to identify places displayed on the map.)

Cases: The cases have several items of interest within them. In addition, you can insert curiosities to be claimed as treasure, hooks for future adventures, or clues regarding the lost race.

- ◆ A bloated mind flayer is suspended in clear fluid, with its head deflated and brain removed. (This is the mind flayer whose corpse enabled Ythrilnaw to locate the Lunar Citadel.) If the case is opened, foul-smelling liquid covers the floor and the ancient corpse falls out.
- ◆ Four *nautiloids* crawl in a terrarium.
- ◆ An extensive collection of rocks and gems, some whose alien colors and textures are entirely unfamiliar to the characters, rests in the case. Ten are unworked gems of obvious value (500 gp each).

3G. Education Center. Rows of seats fill this room, which is used to indoctrinate clones.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel here can project holograms. A character can discern the following extra function for the panel.

Education Programming: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* Ghostly illusions showing unfamiliar landscapes and strange architecture appear, interspersed with cities and people of influence from the world. Images of illithids occasionally manifest, accompanied by voices in Deep Speech saying, “Obey. Ythrilnaw directs you. Await your moment. Appease your superiors.”

4. Lodging and Recreation Areas

Combat Encounter Level 17 9,600 XP

Grimlock thralls linger here when they have nothing to do for their illithid masters. Ythrilnaw aids its servants by cutting the lights in this entire building as soon as the adventurers are drawn into combat.

Perception DC 18: The character hears the grimlocks gathering food from the garden (area 4F).

Light: Bright light. After 2 rounds of combat, Ythrilnaw remotely deactivates the light panels, plunging areas 3–5 into darkness. Dim light from outside continues to fill areas 4A and 4F.

Monsters: Intellect predator, 4 grimlock berserkers, grimlock hulk, 8 grimlock thugs.

Until the party attracts their notice, the grimlocks are gathering food in the garden (area 4F) and carrying it back to their living quarters (area 4B). Two berserkers and four thugs work near the mushroom forest, with a grimlock hulk guarding them. Two berserkers and four thugs are on their way to and from the garden. An intellect predator lurking near the garden pond is kept by Kymohl (see area 7) as a pet. The creature stays near the pond unless it suspects worthwhile prey is nearby. The other creatures in this encounter do not consider the intellect predator to be an ally.

FAMILIAR FACES

Although Ythrilnaw has determined how to operate the cloning machinery, the illithids’ experiments have so far produced frustratingly inconsistent results. Each batch of twenty or more clones might yield one viable candidate to indoctrinate as an illithid agent. The rest of the malformed or uncontrollable clones are used for experimentation.

It is left to you to determine the appearance of clone corpses the characters encounter, as well as the living specimens discovered in the clone racks. These clones might bear the features of minor characters the adventurers have previously encountered or heard of.

You can replace Kelm Semersted with an ally or a former rival of the characters. Use Kelm’s experiences and reactions as guidelines for how humanoids from the world react to mind flayer experimentation.

4A. Lounging Area. This large open area is filled with trash the grimlocks have discarded. The piled refuse is difficult terrain in the marked squares.

4B. Living Quarters. Much of the strangely shaped furniture in these chambers has been broken or altered for use by the grimlocks. An *evasion shard* is among the debris in one of the rooms.

4C. Grav Tube. This grav tube leads to area 5C.

4D. Converted Quarters. As part of their plots, the illithids converted this chamber to look like a room at an upscale inn. Indoctrinated clones live here, believing themselves to be in the world until they are fully reintroduced to it. Ornate furniture and tapestries decorate the area. One of the tapestries is silk, embroidered with gold thread, and bejeweled (1,000 gp).

Several personal effects have been left behind by clones already sent into the world. You have an opportunity to seed clues here regarding which minor

characters have already been replaced in the world for when the party returns home.

4E. Central Grav Tubes. These tubes are sealed off from the basement access hall (area 2A) unless the characters have opened them. They also provide access to area 5A on the level above.

The control panel here features the default functions and can be used to unseal the tubes.

4F. Garden. This self-sustaining garden was a recreation area. None of the vegetation here is familiar to the adventurers. The ceiling is 30 feet high.

When the characters enter area 4F, read:

The doors sweep open to reveal a carpet of lush blue-green grass. Multihued toadstools as large as small trees tower above unfamiliar shrubs and flowers, and a pond spreads out in their midst. Wide windows line the walls beneath a ceiling high above, providing a full view of the sky and the rocky landscape beyond the area.

Balcony: This walkway (part of area 5B) overlooks the garden from 20 feet above.

Pond: This pool is difficult terrain in squares that touch dry land. It is 5 feet deep in all other squares. The water is clean and drinkable.

Mushroom Forest: Native to the lost race's home world, these large mushrooms produced spores that exhibited a calming effect on lost race members. The thick mushroom stalks are difficult terrain, and they provide partial cover to creatures among them.

Intellect Predator	Level 14 Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast (blind)	XP 1,000
HP 140; Bloodied 70	Initiative +12
AC 25, Fortitude 26, Reflex 23, Will 27	Perception +18
Speed 8	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Claw ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d6 + 8 damage.	
⚡ Body Thief (charm, psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one stunned creature); +17 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends; the target takes a -2 penalty to the saving throw). While the target is dominated by the predator, the predator occupies the target's space and cannot be targeted or take damage. The predator cannot use claw while the target is dominated. When the target saves, the predator appears in the unoccupied space nearest to the target.	
Afterside: The target is dazed (save ends).	
⚡ Thought Lance ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +17 vs. Will	
Hit: The target is stunned until the end of the predator's next turn.	
⚡ Mind Shock (psychic) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +17 vs. Will	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). In addition, the predator slides the target 1 square.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
🎭 Puppet Master (charm) ♦ At-Will (1/round)	
Effect: The predator causes the creature dominated by its body thief power to take a move action or a minor action.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
🧠 Mind's Resilience ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: The predator takes damage while subject to an effect that a save can end.	
Effect (No Action): The predator makes a saving throw.	
Skills Stealth +17	
Str 16 (+10)	Dex 20 (+12)
Con 20 (+15)	Int 8 (+6)
	Wis 16 (+10)
	Cha 22 (+13)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages telepathy 10	

4 Grimlock Berserkers	Level 13 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (blind)	XP 800 each
HP 156; Bloodied 78	Initiative +7
AC 25, Fortitude 27, Reflex 22, Will 23	Perception +8
Speed 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
TRAITS	
Grimlock Rage	
Whenever its attack bloodies an enemy, the grimlock gains 10 temporary hit points.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Greataxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 13 damage, or 2d12 + 37 damage on a critical hit.	
⚔ Power Attack (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 19 damage, or 2d12 + 43 damage on a critical hit.	
⚔ Frenzied Attack ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The grimlock uses greataxe twice against a bloodied enemy.	
Skills Athletics +17	
Str 22 (+12)	Dex 12 (+7)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 7 (+4)
	Wis 15 (+8)
	Cha 9 (+5)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment greataxe	

8 Grimlock Thugs	Level 18 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid (blind)	XP 500 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +14
AC 30, Fortitude 31, Reflex 29, Will 29	Perception +14
Speed 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Greataxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 15 damage, or 18 damage to a bloodied target.	
Str 24 (+16)	Dex 20 (+14)
Con 14 (+11)	Int 7 (+7)
	Wis 21 (+14)
	Cha 9 (+8)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment greataxe	

Grimlock Hulk	Level 16 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (blind)	XP 1,400
HP 190; Bloodied 95	Initiative +12
AC 28, Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 27	Perception +12
Speed 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
TRAIT	
Bloody Wrath	
The grimlock's weapon attacks deal 1d10 extra damage to bloodied targets.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Morningstar (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 15 damage, and the target falls prone.	
⚔ Reaping Star (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 17 damage, and the grimlock can push the target 1 square and knock it prone.	
Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +18	
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 19 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 7 (+6)
	Wis 19 (+12)
	Cha 9 (+7)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment morningstar	

Tactics: As soon as the grimlocks become aware of the party, they attack and shout out an alarm. Other grimlocks and the intellect predator join the fray as soon as they can move to the area of the battle. If combat begins outside area 4F, the grimlocks make a fighting retreat toward that area until all of them have joined the battle. The grimlocks focus their attacks to quickly bloody foes, then benefit from their abilities related to that condition.

At the start of the third round, Ythrlnaw shuts off the lights throughout the building (areas 1–5) to give the grimlocks a temporary advantage. Dim light from outside fills areas 4A and 4F even with the lights out.

Conclusion

Ythrlnaw sends a mind flayer and grimlocks from the laboratory to deal with the party. The creatures arrive 5 minutes after combat begins (see area 5).

5. Dining and Meeting Halls

Combat Encounter Level 17 **8,200 XP**

Reinforcements enter the building from the cloning center 5 minutes after Ythrlnaw becomes aware of the party's presence in area 4.

Light: None. Dim light from outside fills area 5C even with the lights out.

Monsters: Mind flayer unseen, rakshasa mage, 2 grimlock hulks, 2 grimlock bodyguards.

The mind flayer and its allies attempt to stalk the party after the creatures arrive in area 5E. If they do not encounter the adventurers, they make their way to the balcony (area 5B) to scan the garden for foes. If they still spot no enemies, the mind flayer sends four grimlocks down the grav tubes in area 5A to scout area 4E. The rakshasa guards the balcony while the illithid lingers in the cafeteria (area 5D) with the remaining grimlocks, listening for the intruders.

Rakshasa's Ruse: The rakshasa uses *deceptive veil* to appear as a half-elf named Gwen, then claims to have been abducted by the illithids. As long as the ruse holds, the rakshasa tries to learn how the characters arrived at the base while it leads them to the cafeteria.

5A. Central Grav Tubes. These tubes connect with area 4E on the ground level. If the tubes have been unsealed between areas 4E and 2A, a creature can proceed all the way to the basement level.

The control panel here features the default functions and can be used to unseal the tubes.

5B. Garden Balcony. This balcony looks down on the garden (area 4F) 20 feet below.

5C. Observation Deck. Two large columns support the ceiling 40 feet overhead. Windows provide a view of the other two modules (the cloning center and the laboratory) and the access corridors leading to them. Lights can be seen in the cloning center, but the laboratory is dark.

The grav tube here leads to area 4C.

When the characters enter area 5C, read:

Two thick columns stretch to the roof high overhead. The ceiling and walls are set with panoramic windows revealing the bleak landscape beyond.

A pair of enclosed bridges can be seen leading to two more structures in the distance. Although one glimmers with light that suggests activity, the other building appears dark and empty.

5D. Cafeteria. This large room is a dining hall. A successful DC 25 Perception check as part of a thorough search of the area locates a *nautiloid* crawling beneath a cabinet.

In addition to their default functions, the control panels here dispense food. A character can discern the following additional function for these panels.

Dispense Food: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* A slot expels a foul-smelling yet edible paste, which provides a character's food and water needs for 1 day.

5E. Meeting Halls. These rooms each contain a single large table and six chairs.

The tables have control panels built into them. In addition to their default functions, these control panels also operate visual displays built into the walls. The wall displays are not visible until they are activated. A character can discern the following additional function for a table's panel.

Planning Display: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* The wall display shows detailed images of areas familiar to the characters, places that the illithids have targeted for their future plans. Use these images to plant hooks for future adventures.

5F. Access Corridor. The control panel here features the default functions and can operate the open bulkhead door. In addition, it enables the use of an emergency protocol. Another panel 15 squares away

down the corridor has the same functions. A character can discern the following additional function for these panels.

Barrier Protocol: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function.

Success: A bulkhead door next to the control panel shuts, as does the bulkhead next to the other panel with the same function. Life support shuts down in the 15 squares between these bulkheads, and the atmosphere is instantly evacuated from the area. A creature in the area takes 10 cold damage at the end of each of its turns, and could suffocate (*Rules Compendium*, page 180).

2 Grimlock Hulks	Level 16 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (blind)	XP 1,400 each
HP 190; Bloodied 95	Initiative +12
AC 28, Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 27	Perception +12
Speed 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
TRAIT	
Bloody Wrath	
The grimlock's weapon attacks deal 1d10 extra damage to bloodied targets.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Morningstar (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 15 damage, and the target falls prone.	
⚔ Reaping Star (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 17 damage, and the grimlock can push the target 1 square and knock it prone.	
Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +18	
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 19 (+12) Wis 19 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 7 (+6) Cha 9 (+7)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment morningstar	

Mind Flayer Unseen	Level 18 Lurker
Medium aberrant humanoid	XP 2,000
HP 126; Bloodied 63	Initiative +20
AC 32, Fortitude 28, Reflex 31, Will 30	Perception +18
Speed 7	Darkvision
TRAITS	
Unseen Focus (illusion)	
The mind flayer is invisible while it has a creature grabbed.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
<i>Requirement:</i> The mind flayer must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex. This attack automatically hits a dazed or stunned target.	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, and the mind flayer grabs the target (escape DC 23) if it does not have a creature grabbed.	
⚔ Extract Brain (healing) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the mind flayer); +21 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 6d6 + 20 damage, and the target is dazed until it is no longer grabbed. If the attack reduces the target to 0 hit points or fewer, the target dies and the mind flayer regains 15 hit points.	
⚔ Mind-Clouding Blast (illusion, psychic) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +21 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Miss: Half damage.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Mental Cloak (illusion, teleportation) ♦ Recharge when an attack hits the mind flayer	
Effect: The mind flayer teleports up to its speed, and it becomes invisible until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Arcana +20, Insight +18, Stealth +21	
Str 18 (+13)	Dex 25 (+16) Wis 18 (+13)
Con 12 (+10)	Int 23 (+15) Cha 22 (+15)
Alignment evil	
Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 20	

Rakshasa Mage	Level 16 Controller
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,400
HP 153; Bloodied 76	Initiative +10
AC 30, Fortitude 26, Reflex 29, Will 28	Perception +11
Speed 6	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Claw (teleportation) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 10 damage, and the rakshasa teleports the target up to 3 squares.	
Miss: The rakshasa can teleport the target 1 square.	
⚔ Misleading Visions (illusion, psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (enemies in the burst); +19 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d10 + 11 psychic damage, and the rakshasa slides the target up to 4 squares.	
Miss: The rakshasa can slide the target 1 square.	
⚔ Visions of Terror (fear, illusion, psychic) ♦ Recharge ☐☐	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (enemies in the burst); +19 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d10 + 13 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the rakshasa's next turn.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Deceptive Veil (illusion) ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The rakshasa disguises itself to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses <i>deceptive veil</i> again or until it drops to 0 hit points. Other creatures can make a DC 36 Insight check to discern that the form is an illusion.	
Persistent Image (illusion) ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The rakshasa creates an illusion of a Medium or smaller object or creature in an unoccupied square within 10 squares of it. The illusion can be animate, but it does not produce noise. The illusion lasts until the end of the rakshasa's next turn. A creature that succeeds on a DC 22 Insight check can see through the illusion.	
<i>Sustain Minor:</i> The illusion persists until the end of the rakshasa's next turn, and the rakshasa can move the illusion up to 6 squares.	
Str 12 (+9)	Dex 14 (+10) Wis 16 (+11)
Con 17 (+11)	Int 24 (+15) Cha 21 (+13)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common	

2 Grimlock Bodyguards	Level 14 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (blind)	XP 1,000 each
HP 139; Bloodied 69	Initiative +14
AC 30, Fortitude 27, Reflex 26, Will 25	Perception +11
Speed 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
TRAIT	
Bodyguard Shift	
When the grimlock shifts no more than 1 square, it can slide an adjacent enemy marked by it 1 square and shift into the square the enemy vacated.	
Guarded Mark	
Any enemy that ends its turn adjacent to the grimlock is marked by the grimlock until the end of the enemy's next turn. Any enemy marked by the grimlock cannot gain combat advantage by flanking any grimlock bodyguard.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Greatsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Stick and Shift ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The grimlock uses <i>greatsword</i> , then shifts 1 square.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚡ Mindlash (psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of and marked by the grimlock makes an attack that does not include the grimlock as a target.	
Effect (<i>Immediate Interrupt</i>): Close burst 5 (the triggering enemy); 10 psychic damage	
Str 23 (+13)	Dex 20 (+12)
Con 19 (+11)	Int 11 (+7)
	Wis 19 (+11)
	Cha 11 (+7)
Alignment evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Equipment mismatched plate armor, greatsword	

Tactics: The rakshasa employs *misleading visions* and *claw* to either force foes toward the grimlocks or over the balcony. It reserves *visions of terror* to cover the mind flayer's retreat.

Opening with *mind-clouding blast*, the mind flayer then uses its *tentacles* to grab a target for its *extract brain* power. Using *mental cloak*, it performs hit-and-run attacks. If the fight goes poorly, the mind flayer retreats through the access corridor (area 5F), attempting to

reach the farther control panel and activate the barrier protocol to hinder the party. If it escapes, it waits in area 9B, joining in any combat there.

The grimlocks use their powers to keep attackers away from the rakshasa and the mind flayer.

6. Medical Center

Combat Encounter Level 18 10,300 XP

The mind flayer Kymohl uses this area to experiment with the lost race's medical technology. Absorbed in its work, the illithid pays no attention to intruders until they invade this section of the citadel.

Kymohl's obsession with technology has overridden its ties to the elder brain, making it an outcast. The knowledge Kymohl gathers concerning failed clones is the only reason Ythrilnaw allows it to remain in the Lunar Citadel.

Light: Dim light.

Monsters: Kymohl (mind flayer thrall master), 2 thoon hulks.

Using the technology here, Kymohl has created a pair of thoon hulks. These enraged creatures are sealed in the isolation room (area 6D).

6A. Medical Lab. Displays on the walls show anatomical graphics of a variety of familiar and unfamiliar creatures. Medical supplies fill several shelves here. Any search locates three *stimulant injectors*.

6B. Operating Chamber. Kymohl is here, using the area's medical machinery to dissect a failed clone of Kelm Semersted. If the real Kelm is with the party, he screams uncontrollably, then faints.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel here also operates the medical machinery. A character can discern the following additional function for the panel.

Administer Medical Aid: Intelligence DC 17 or Heal DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function, and the target of the aid must be reclining on a

medical table. *Success:* The target regains hit points as if it spent a healing surge. A creature can benefit from this treatment only once per day. *Failure (12 or lower):* The target takes 15 damage.

When the characters enter area 6B, read:

A gaunt mind flayer with ashen skin toils over strange equipment, making adjustments to control panels. A mass of metal arms tipped with blades prods and cuts a bloody humanoid form on a table in the center of the room. Roars and shrieks can be heard down an adjacent corridor.

6C. Recovery Room. Mind flayers use the beds in this area to nurse immature clones to full health. Devices connected to the control panel here monitor the clones.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel here also operates the medical records database. A character can discern the following additional functions for the panel.

Medical Advice: Intelligence DC 17 or Heal DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function, and the target for which advice is sought must be reclining on a medical table. *Success:* The panel's user receives a +5 bonus to the next Heal check performed on the target.

Patient Records: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement:* The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success:* The panel displays images of clones that have recently recovered in this room, potentially revealing mind flayer spies back in the world. Use this information to plant adventure hooks—or to reveal that one of the adventurers is a clone (see the "One of Us" sidebar, page 3).

6D. Isolation Room. This room served as a quarantine chamber. A single bed is molded into one of its oddly soft walls. The thoon hulks created by Kymohl are confined here.

2 Mind Flayer Level 14 Elite Controller (Leader) Thrall Masters	
Medium aberrant humanoid	XP 2,000 each
HP 260; Bloodied 130	Initiative +9
AC 28, Fortitude 23, Reflex 27, Will 26	Perception +10
Speed 7	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The mind flayer must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex. This attack automatically hits a dazed or stunned target.	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and the mind flayer grabs the target (escape DC 21) if it does not have a creature grabbed.	
⬇ Manipulate Brain ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the mind flayer); +17 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d6 + 10 damage, and the target is stunned until it is no longer grabbed by the mind flayer. If this attack reduces the target to 0 hit points or fewer, the mind flayer does one of the following.	
Eat Brain (healing): The target dies, and the mind flayer regains 20 hit points.	
Thrall Surgery (charm): Instead of dropping to 0 hit points or fewer, the target remains at 1 hit point. It is dominated until the mind flayer dies.	

6E. Triage Center. Gurneys in this chamber are laden with the remains of creatures on which Kymohl has experimented. Some of the corpses might resemble minor characters familiar to the adventurers, but their deformity makes positive identification difficult (DC 23 Heal check). The adventurers can clearly note bodies that are based on the same person, providing another clue to the illithids' cloning scheme.

A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Dungeoneering check notices that most of the bodies' brains have not been consumed, contrary to expectation for the victims of mind flayers.

The control panel here can be used to unseal the bulkhead that leads to area 7.

⚡ Mind Blast (psychic) ♦ Recharge [2]	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +17 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If the mind flayer scores a critical hit against the target, the target is dominated instead of dazed (save ends).	
Miss: Half damage.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⚡ Thrall Strike (charm) ♦ At-Will (1/round)	
Effect: Ranged sight (one ally or creature dominated by the mind flayer). The target makes a basic attack as a free action.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚡ Teleport Thrall (teleportation) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy targets the mind flayer with a melee attack.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (one ally or creature in the burst dominated by the mind flayer). The mind flayer teleports up to 5 squares and teleports the target to the square it vacated. The triggering attack targets the target instead of the mind flayer.	
Skills Arcana +18, Insight +15	
Str 14 (+9)	Dex 15 (+9) Wis 17 (+10)
Con 10 (+7)	Int 23 (+13) Cha 20 (+12)
Alignment evil	Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 20

Tactics: The moment it becomes aware of intruders in area 6, Kymohl uses the control panel to open the door to area 6D, releasing the thoon hulks. If prevented from doing so, the illithid outcast negotiates with the party, expressing an interest in any lost race technology the adventurers might be carrying. In exchange for several such items, Kymohl might permit the characters to pass unmolested through area 6E, confident that the elder brain and its guards can deal with them.

In combat, Kymohl employs *mind blast* before using *tentacles* to concentrate on dazed or dominated opponents. It creates dominated thralls with *manipulate brain* unless it is bloodied, in which case it eats the

2 Thoon Hulks Level 22 Brute	
Large aberrant humanoid, mind flayer	XP 4,150 each
HP 255; Bloodied 127	Initiative +18
AC 34, Fortitude 35, Reflex 33, Will 32	Perception +19
Speed 6	Darkvision
Resist 10 psychic	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ Eviscerate ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +27 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d10 + 16 damage (6d10 + 16 against a creature grabbed by the Thoon hulk).	
⚡ Mind Blast (psychic) ♦ Recharge [2]	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +25 vs. Will	
Hit: 1d12 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
⚡ Call of Thoon (charm, psychic) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +25 vs. Will	
Hit: 4d12 + 20 psychic damage.	
Effect: The Thoon hulk pulls the target 10 squares to a square adjacent to it.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⬇ Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The Thoon hulk must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The Thoon hulk grabs the target.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚡ Psychic Explosion (psychic) ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The Thoon hulk drops to 0 hit points.	
Attack (No Action): Close burst 2 (enemies in burst); +26 vs. Will	
Hit: Ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends).	
Str 28 (+20)	Dex 24 (+18) Wis 26 (+19)
Con 25 (+18)	Int 6 (+19) Cha 23 (+17)
Alignment evil	Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10

target's brain. Kymohl keeps the thoon hulks close to dangerous party members using *teleport thrall*.

Despite their frenzied appearance, the thoon hulks obey Kymohl, fighting to the death to protect him. They use *call of thoon* to divide their opposition and keep foes from reaching their master.

LABORATORY AND CLONING CENTER

Much of the equipment in the two-story laboratory building was shut down when the lost race departed. The illithids continue experimenting with what remains, and they have converted the space into living quarters for them, their guards, and the elder brain.

Ythrlnaw has taken great care with the cloning machinery, and that area of the citadel remains in excellent shape. Only the ulitharid and its bodyguards are permitted in the heart of the complex.

7. Laboratory Upper Level

Combat Encounter Level 18 10,000 XP

The illithids experiment with the lost race's dimensional warping technology here.

Light: Dim light.

Monsters: 2 mind flayer thrall masters, 6 ironskin warriors.

The upper level of the laboratory houses the mind flayers and their guards, as well as several chambers containing lost race technology. Currently, the illithids are experimenting with using the lost race's transit system to reach the Far Realm. They have isolated themselves while conducting this experiment, so Ythrlnaw cannot warn them of intruders.

The mind flayers are initially in area 7D. Four of the ironskin warrior minotaurs are supposed to patrol the corridors between the various chambers, but only two currently do so. Two others are in the psychic lab (area 7E), playing with the machine. The remaining minotaurs are resting in their lair (area 7B). If the guards spot intruders, they shout out to raise the alarm.

7A. Grav Tube. This tube leads down to area 8A. The control panel here features the default functions.

7B. Minotaur Lair. Rough bedding and bloody stains on the floor indicate that the minotaurs sleep

Mind Flayer Level 14 Elite Controller (Leader)	
Thrall Master	
Medium aberrant humanoid	XP 2,000
HP 260; Bloodied 130	Initiative +9
AC 28, Fortitude 23, Reflex 27, Will 26	Perception +10
Speed 7	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
Requirement: The mind flayer must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex. This attack automatically hits a dazed or stunned target.	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and the mind flayer grabs the target (escape DC 21) if it does not have a creature grabbed.	
✖ Manipulate Brain ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the mind flayer); +17 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d6 + 10 damage, and the target is stunned until it is no longer grabbed by the mind flayer. If this attack reduces the target to 0 hit points or fewer, the mind flayer does one of the following.	
Eat Brain (healing): The target dies, and the mind flayer regains 20 hit points.	
Thrall Surgery (charm): Instead of dropping to 0 hit points or fewer, the target remains at 1 hit point. It is dominated until the mind flayer dies.	

and dine here. Unlike the illithids, the minotaurs are happy to eat failed clones. Among their possessions are 1,000 gp in various containers and a bejeweled gold idol of Baphomet (3,000 gp).

7C. Illithid Chambers. These quarters house illithids, and the rooms are filled with an assortment of devices the mind flayers use for eating and personal grooming. One such set of illithid cutlery is platinum and set with rubies (2,500 gp). A box in one of the rooms also contains 70 pp.

7D. Portal Lab. This lab is used to conduct experiments with the lost race's portal technology. The illithids have opened a semifunctional portal to the Far Realm. Because the technology cannot support

⚡ Mind Blast (psychic) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞ ☞

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +17 vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If the mind flayer scores a critical hit against the target, the target is dominated instead of dazed (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

MINOR ACTIONS

Thrall Strike (charm) ♦ At-Will (1/round)

Effect: Ranged sight (one ally or creature dominated by the mind flayer). The target makes a basic attack as a free action.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Teleport Thrall (teleportation) ♦ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy targets the mind flayer with a melee attack.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (one ally or creature in the burst dominated by the mind flayer). The mind flayer teleports up to 5 squares and teleports the target to the square it vacated. The triggering attack targets the target instead of the mind flayer.

Skills Arcana +18, Insight +15

Str 14 (+9)

Dex 15 (+9)

Wis 17 (+10)

Con 10 (+7)

Int 23 (+13)

Cha 20 (+12)

Alignment evil

Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 20

such a connection, the portal produces a strange effect instead (see below).

When the characters enter area 7D, read:

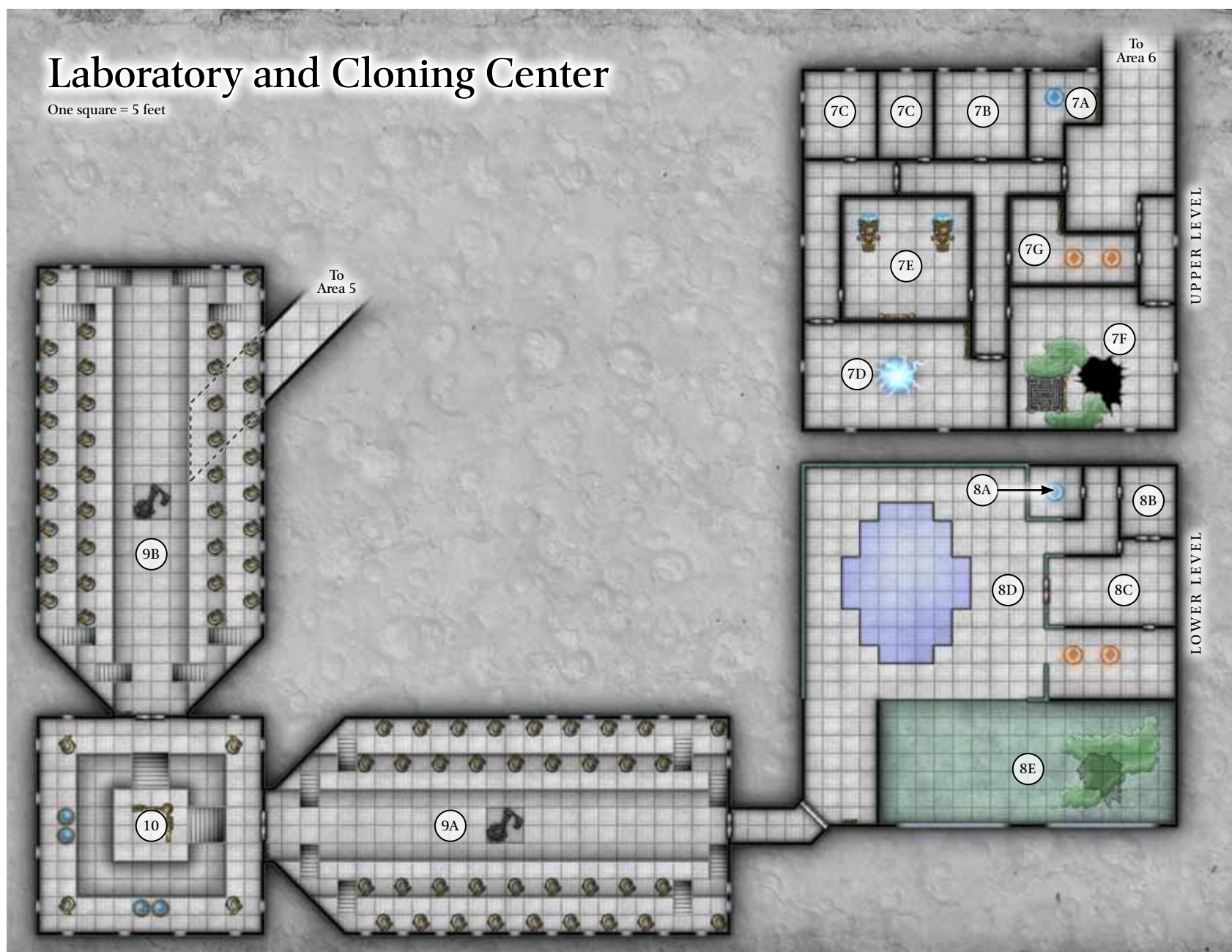
Hanging in the air, a swirling field of light offers glimpses of a disturbing reality of twisting tentacles. One mind flayer manipulates a control panel while another stares at the writhing portal. Its tentacles squirm as if it is communicating with its cohort.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel here operates the portal. A character can discern the following additional function for the panel.

Close Portal: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). Requirement: The character must

Laboratory and Cloning Center

One square = 5 feet



have successfully discerned this function. *Success*: The portal disappears. *Failure*: The portal pulls each creature in the room 1 square.

Far Realm Portal: The field of light is a portal to the Far Realm. If a nonaberrant creature enters the portal's space, that creature is removed from play until the start of its next turn. At the start of its next turn, the creature returns in a nonhazardous, unoccupied square of your choice in the room, then takes 15 psychic damage, falls prone, and is dazed (save ends).

7E. Psychic Lab. This lab houses a device to manipulate clones' psyches. The lost race never completed its experiments, so the device remains unreliable.

In addition to its default functions, the control panel operates the psychic machinery. A character can discern the following additional function for the panel.

Psychic Programming: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Requirement*: The character must have successfully discerned this function. *Success*: The machines in this room hum and project light into the space between them. If no creature is in a square between the machines, nothing else happens. If one or more creatures move between the machines, roll a d6 for each creature to determine the effect. Each effect lasts for 5 minutes.

1. *Hatred*: The creature treats one random creature that it can see as an enemy. A successful DC 23 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check convinces the creature that its belief is erroneous, ending the effect.

2. *Fear*: The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls. In addition, if it is bloodied, it flees from combat. A successful DC 23 Bluff check or Diplomacy check calms the creature, ending the effect.

3. *Despair*: The creature sobs uncontrollably, granting combat advantage. A successful DC 23 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check calms the creature, ending the effect.

4. *Calm*: The creature gains a +2 power bonus to ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws.

5. *Confidence*: The creature is immune to fear effects and gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls.

6. *Love*: The creature treats one random creature that it can see as a dear friend. The creature is susceptible to Bluff checks and Diplomacy checks from the friend, taking a -4 penalty to Insight checks made against such checks. The creature does everything it can to aid the friend, both in and out of combat.

7F. Chemical Lab. The devices here were among the first the illithids experimented with, leading to disastrous results. A ruined machine now continually leaks glowing goo that has dissolved a hole in the floor and pours down into area 8E. (If the carrion crawler in that area hears movement, it readies an action to attack creatures that fall into the habitat.)

The control panel here has shut down and cannot perform even default functions.

Caustic Goo: Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the goo takes 15 acid damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn. Any creature that comes in contact with the goo glows for 5 minutes, taking a -10 penalty to Stealth checks.

7G. Damaged Grav Tubes. The grav tubes here have malfunctioned, indicated by a flashing red light. Any creature that steps into a malfunctioning tube falls 20 feet to area 8D, alerting the elder brain.

Tactics: When confronted by intruders, the ironskin warriors use *heart of the gorgon* to slow the adventurers while shouting for reinforcements. When the other minotaurs arrive, they enter combat with *goring charge*.

The thrall masters remain out of melee range, relying on *mind blast* and *thrall strike* as they evade their foes, fall back, and wait for *mind blast* to recharge. Given the opportunity, the mind flayers force foes into the chemical lab (area 7F).

If one of the mind flayers is slain, the other attempts to flee by way of the functioning grav tube (area 7A) to reach the elder brain.

6 Ironskin Warriors	Level 14 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, minotaur	XP 1,000 each
HP 140; Bloodied 70	Initiative +15
AC 30, Fortitude 27, Reflex 26, Will 25	Perception +13
Speed 6	
Resist 10 poison	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Greataxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 9 damage, and the target is slowed and cannot shift (save ends both).	
⚔ Goring Charge ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The warrior charges and makes the following attack in place of a melee basic attack.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target falls prone.	
⚔ Heart of the Gorgon (poison) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +17 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).	
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is petrified.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚔ Ironskin Ferocity	
Trigger: The warrior drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The warrior uses <i>greataxe</i> . If the attack hits, the target is immobilized until the end of the target's next turn.	
Skills Athletics +18, Endurance +17	
Str 23 (+13)	Dex 23 (+13)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 20 (+12)
	Wis 23 (+13)
	Cha 20 (+12)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment greataxe	

8. Laboratory Lower Level

Combat Encounter Level 19 13,400 XP

The elder brain lives and schemes here.

Light: None other than dim light in area 8E. Light panels do not function here.

Monsters: Elder brain, enormous carrion crawler.

8A. Grav Tube. This grav tube leads to area 7A.

8B. Storage. Ythrilnaw has a collection of technological items here for experimentation. Arrayed on several tables are two *greater sleep grenades*, two *stimulant injectors*, and a level 19 *blaster rifle*^T.

8C. Ythrilnaw's Chamber. This room is furnished with the unusual trappings of a mind flayer, such as a furnishing of whorled stone that looks designed for reclining and similar designs on the wall. A large stone chest here contains platinum cutlery (500 gp), 90 pp, and an unusual luminescent jewel (2,500 gp).

8D. Brain Pool. This open space has been converted to serve as a lair for the elder brain. This creature normally rests in its pool, and it attacks intruders the moment they are detected.

When the characters enter area 8D, read:

The atmosphere here is warm and thick with the odor of stagnant water. The walls are dark and glossy, and they are cast of a strange material impressed with unsettling spiral patterns. A railing blocks a drop into a larger adjoining chamber.

Dominating the room is an expansive pool, within which glistens an immense, quivering brain draped in tentacles. It shudders as if in response to your presence, and the air fills with palpable thoughts of pure hate.

Perception DC 23: The character sees tadpole-like creatures swimming throughout the pool.

Aberrant Walls: Illithids sculpted the walls to emanate an aberrant aura. Nonaberrant creatures in the room take a -2 penalty to saving throws.

Elder Brain	Level 23 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast (blind)	XP 10,200
HP 436; Bloodied 218	Initiative +17
AC 37, Fortitude 33, Reflex 35, Will 37	Perception +19
Speed 2, teleport 6	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
⚙️ Warp Reality ♦ Aura 5	
Any enemy that teleports while within the aura takes 10 damage.	
Absorb Thoughts	
Whenever a nonminion ally within 10 squares of the elder brain drops to 0 hit points, the elder brain makes a saving throw or a power recharge roll.	
Unseeing Telepathy	
The elder brain can communicate with other creatures telepathically even if it does not have line of effect to those creatures.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ Tentacle Warp (teleportation) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage. The elder brain teleports the target 3 squares, and the target is immobilized until the end of the elder brain's next turn.	

Brain Pool: Because the elder brain and Ythrilnaw have determined that their operation cannot currently sustain more mind flayers, the brain pool is seething with mind flayer tadpoles desperate for hosts. These illithid infants magnify psychic trauma. Nonaberrant creatures have vulnerable 10 psychic while in the pool.

A creature that ends its turn in the pool is subject to the following attack as young illithids swarm in a hungry frenzy.

⚡ Feeding Frenzy ♦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d6 + 12 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is also dazed (save ends both).
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is dominated by the elder brain (save ends).

⚡ Flailing Warp ♦ At-Will

Effect: The elder brain uses *tentacle warp* three times, making each attack against a different target.

⚡ Mind Burst (psychic) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡

Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +27 vs. Will

Hit: 3d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

MINOR ACTIONS

⚡ Sensory Overload (psychic, teleportation) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡

Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +27 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is blinded and deafened until the end of the elder brain's next turn. The elder brain then teleports the target 3 squares.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Baleful Transfer ♦ At-Will

Trigger: The elder brain saves against an effect.

Effect (No Action): An enemy within 5 squares of the elder brain is subjected to the same effect the elder brain saved against (save ends).

Skills Arcana +25, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24, Dungeoneering +24,

Str 23 (+17)

Dex 23 (+17)

Wis 26 (+19)

Con 26 (+19)

Int 28 (+20)

Cha 27 (+19)

Alignment evil

Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 50

Bulkhead Door: This door is normally sealed. The nearby control panel can open it.

Damaged Grav Tubes: These tubes have malfunctioned, as indicated by a flashing red light. Characters climbing the tubes can reach area 7G above.

Treasure: One of a pair of *dimension hoops* sits at the edge of the pool. It is linked to the one in Ythrilnaw's possession. If the characters discover how the hoop is used, anything they send through arrives in area 10.

8E. Creature Habitat. This sunken habitat formerly held unusual creatures for study. It is now the domain of an enormous carrion crawler trained to the illithids' service. Plants and grass here are of the same unfamiliar types found in area 4F. The floor is 20 feet below the railing.

Enormous Carrion Crawler		Level 17 Elite Soldier
Huge aberrant beast		XP 3,200
HP 332; Bloodied 166		Initiative +14
AC 33, Fortitude 31, Reflex 30, Will 29		Perception +11
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)		Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
TRAITS		
Threatening Reach		
The carrion crawler can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 3 squares of it.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Tentacles (poison) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +20 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage, the carrion crawler can pull the target 1 square, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).		
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).		
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).		
⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +22 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d12 + 12 damage.		
⬇ Hungry Assault ♦ At-Will		
Effect: The carrion crawler uses <i>tentacles</i> twice or uses <i>tentacles</i> once and <i>bite</i> once.		
↩ Tentacle Flurry (poison) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied		
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +20 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).		
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).		
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).		
Str 25 (+15)	Dex 18 (+12)	Wis 16 (+11)
Con 22 (+14)	Int 4 (+5)	Cha 18 (+12)
Alignment unaligned Languages –		

Caustic fluid from the leaky machinery in area 7F leaks from the hole in the ceiling 30 feet above. The glowing liquid fills the area with dim light.

Caustic Goo: Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the goo takes 15 acid damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn. Any creature that comes in contact with the goo glows for 5 minutes, taking a -10 penalty to Stealth checks.

Tactics: When attacked, the elder brain telepathically commands the carrion crawler to emerge from its habitat. The elder brain begins combat using *mind burst*, then uses *sensory overload* to teleport enemies into the brain pool. Whenever possible, it uses *tentacle warp* to place enemies within the reach of the carrion crawler. If the carrion crawler stuns a foe, that power instead teleports the enemy into the brain pool.

When the elder brain sends a telepathic command, the carrion crawler climbs from its habitat and attacks any enemy within reach.

Although this area is not subject to observation-sphere surveillance, if the elder brain believes it is in danger, it uses *unseeing telepathy* to contact Ythrilnaw. The ulitharid opens the bulkhead remotely and sends a wave of eight undeveloped clones (see area 9) to aid the elder brain. These clones arrive at the start of the round after the elder brain calls for aid.

9. Clone Racks

Combat Encounter Level 17 8,000 XP

As soon as Ythrilnaw detects that the party has infiltrated this area, it unleashes a wave of clones. The ulitharid then uses the mechanical arm to attack the characters remotely from the cloning chamber.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: 12 undeveloped clones.

Trap: Mechanical arm.

Ythrilnaw releases the clones into area 9A or area 9B, whichever room the party is in. The ulitharid then uses the mechanical arm remotely from area 10 to grab foes and deposit them in the empty pods.

When the characters enter area 9A or 9B, read:

Tiered racks of brass cylinders, each over six feet tall, flank the walkway of this room. A glass plate set in the front of each cylinder reveals the vague image of a humanoid face within it.

Metal stairs provide access to the dozens of cylinders, each of which sprouts tubes and pipes that run up to the ceiling. A huge metal claw is mounted there, tending the cylinders.

9A and 9B. Clone Racks. Each of these identical chambers houses cloning pods. A large mechanical arm mounted in the center of the ceiling transports the pods to and from the cloning chamber (area 10).

The doors to area 10 are locked. Because Ythrilnaw tries to override any attempt at opening them, a character who wants to do so must make a successful DC 23 Thievery check using the control panel.

In addition to their default functions, the control panels in each area operate the cloning machinery. A character can discern the following additional functions for these panels.

Operate Mechanical Arm: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 23 (standard action). *Special:* If Ythrilnaw is directing the arm, the character must succeed on a check whenever he or she tries to use this function.

See the seize control countermeasure on the trap.
Requirement: The character must have successfully discerned this function. **Success:** The character can direct the mechanical arm to attack a target of his or her choice.

Open Pod: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 22 (standard action). **Requirement:** The character must have successfully discerned this function. **Success:** The character selects up to six sealed pods to open, awakening and releasing any clones within them. If the character succeeds on the check by 5 or more, the released clones follow the character's instructions.

Mechanical Arm	Level 18 Trap
Object	XP 2,000
Detect automatic	Initiative +12
HP 150	
AC 30, Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will –	
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; Vulnerable 5 lightning	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Claw ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage, the target is grabbed (escape DC 23), and the arm slides the target up to 5 squares. While grabbing a creature, the arm can use <i>claw</i> only against that creature.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
♦ Climb: Athletics DC 20 (move action). <i>Two Successes:</i> The character can ascend to the arm's ceiling housing. <i>Failure (15 or lower):</i> The character falls.	
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 23 (standard action). Requirement: The character must have climbed to the arm's ceiling housing. <i>Three Successes:</i> The arm ceases to function. <i>Failure (18 or lower):</i> The character and any creature grabbed by the arm take 15 lightning damage.	
♦ Seize Control: Intelligence DC 17 or Thievery DC 23 (standard action). Success: The character can direct the arm to use <i>claw</i> once against a target of his or her choice, as well as to release any creature grabbed by the arm. Failure (by 5 or more): The character and any creature grabbed by the arm take 15 lightning damage.	

12 Undeveloped Clones	Level 18 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 500 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +12	
AC 30, Fortitude 30, Reflex 30, Will 29	
Speed 6	
Perception +9	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Slam ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 16 damage, and the clone grabs the target (escape DC 23).	
Str 16 (+12)	Dex 16 (+12)
Con 12 (+10)	Int 10 (+9)
	Wis 10 (+9)
	Cha 12 (+10)
Alignment unaligned	
Languages understands Common	

Tactics: The clones surround characters by moving up and down the racks of pods.

Ythrilnaw, using the controls in area 10, directs the mechanical arm to trap characters in empty pods. The ulitharid focuses its attacks on any foe using the control panel to seize control of the arm or open the door to the cloning chamber.

Cloning Pods

A Medium or smaller creature can enter or be forced into an open, empty pod. When a creature does so, the pod closes instantly and automatically.

Escaping from a pod requires a DC 23 Athletics check or Thievery check (a move action). One creature outside the pod can attempt the check to release a captured creature. If two creatures are working together, one can attempt the check while the other assists.

While within a pod, a creature is dazed and restrained. It has line of sight to the area outside the pod, and creatures outside the pod have line of sight to the creature in the pod. No line of effect extends between inside the pod and outside the pod. A creature freed from a pod is dazed (save ends).

10. Cloning Chamber

Combat Encounter Level 21 16,400 XP

Ythrilnaw monitors the entire Lunar Citadel from here with its bodyguards.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: Ythrilnaw (ulitharid), 2 tanarukk steel warriors, 8 undeveloped clones.

Trap: Mechanical arm.

When the characters enter area 10, read:

An elevated platform dominates the center of this vaulted chamber, and the pillars that support it plunge into darkness below. Metal stairs lead from the platform to a walkway around the room's perimeter. More brass and silver cylinders stand around the room.

Atop the platform stands the tall mind flayer that addressed you soon after your arrival. It surveys the controls before it with cold, black eyes while its tentacles work the panel. A mechanical arm descends to adjust one of the cylinders. Two demonic orcs flank the mind flayer, ready to defend their master.

Ythrilnaw is willing to talk, but will not permit the characters to escape. At the first opportunity, the ulitharid pushes its transit beacon (spotted by the characters in event 1) through one of a pair of *dimension hoops* it carries. The beacon emerges at the brain pool (area 8D) where the matching hoop is located. If the characters took the hoop from that area, the transit beacon instead comes to them.

The ulitharid uses telepathy to taunt the adventurers, informing them that it intends to clone whoever survives the coming battle. The evil acts it intends to orchestrate will overshadow the characters' past heroic deeds.

Control Panel: The panel here can operate any doors, grav tubes, and observation spheres in the Lunar Citadel. The panel can also open any clone or duplication pod in the citadel. Thanks to the

Ulitharid	Level 21 Elite Controller
Medium aberrant humanoid, mind flayer	XP 6,400
HP 386; Bloodied 193	Initiative +16
AC 35, Fortitude 32, Reflex 34, Will 33	Perception +17
Speed 7	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ Tentacles ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +24 vs. Reflex. This attack automatically hits a dazed or stunned target.	
Hit: 4d6 + 15 damage, and the ulitharid grabs the target (escape DC 26) if it isn't already grabbing a creature.	
⚡ Manipulate Brain ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the ulitharid); +24 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d8 + 18 damage, and the target is stunned until it is not grabbed by the ulitharid. If this attack drops the target below 1 hit point, the ulitharid does one of the following.	
Eat Brain (healing): The target dies, and the ulitharid regains 30 hit points.	
Thrall Surgery (charm): Instead of dropping below 1 hit point, the target drops to 1 hit point, and it is dominated until the ulitharid dies.	
⚡ Mind Blast (psychic) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +24 vs. Will	
Hit: 4d8 + 16 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Miss: Half damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends).	

ulitharid's extreme familiarity, it uses the control panel to perform the preceding functions as minor actions instead of standard actions. Ythrilnaw still needs to use a standard action to operate any mechanical arm in the citadel.

Mechanical Arm: A mechanical arm is mounted in the center of the ceiling. It functions like the ones in areas 9A and 9B.

Platform: The central platform is 10 feet higher than the outer walkway and 60 feet above the floor. A railing gives anyone forced to the edge a +5 bonus to the saving throw to avoid falling over.

Pods: The pods here function like those in areas 9A and 9B. The blue pods are duplication pods that

MINOR ACTIONS		
⚡ Compulsion (charm, psychic) ♦ At-Will (1/round)		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +24 vs. Will. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.		
Hit: 3d8 + 16 psychic damage, and the ulitharid slides the target up to the target's speed.		
Miss: The ulitharid slides the target up to 2 squares.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⚡ One Step Ahead (teleportation) ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the ulitharid.		
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The ulitharid teleports up to 5 squares, and the triggering enemy grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.		
⚡ Manipulate Reality (teleportation) ♦ Encounter		
Trigger: An enemy hits the ulitharid with an attack.		
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (one ally or creature in the burst dominated by the ulitharid); the ulitharid teleports up to 10 squares and teleports the target to the space it vacated. The triggering attack hits the target instead of the ulitharid.		
Skills Arcana +23, Insight +22		
Str 20 (+15)	Dex 22 (+16)	Wis 24 (+17)
Con 17 (+13)	Int 26 (+18)	Cha 23 (+16)
Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 20		

sample a creature's flesh to create a clone. A creature within a pod takes 15 damage at the start of each of its turns. When the creature takes damage, the nearest empty clone pod starts to produce a clone in the image of the creature in the duplication pod.

Walkway: This walkway is 50 feet above the floor under the inner platform. A railing on the walkway gives anyone forced to the edge a +5 bonus to the saving throw to avoid falling over.

2 Tanarukk Steel Warriors	Level 18 Soldier
Medium elemental humanoid (demon), orc	XP 2,000 each
HP 177; Bloodied 88	Initiative +13
AC 33, Fortitude 30, Reflex 29, Will 30	Perception +12
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ Broadsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage.	
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the steel warrior's next turn.	
⚡ Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage.	
⚡ Burning Cage (fire, weapon) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 20 fire damage, and the target takes 5 fire damage whenever it enters a square during its turn (save ends).	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚡ Combat Awareness ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the steel warrior shifts or makes an attack that does not include the steel warrior as a target.	
Effect (Opportunity Action): The steel warrior can use broadsword against the triggering enemy.	
Indomitable Fury	
Trigger: The steel warrior drops to 0 hit points for the first time.	
Effect (No Action): The steel warrior instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.	
Skills Athletics +20	
Str 22 (+15)	Dex 15 (+11) Wis 17 (+12)
Con 25 (+16)	Int 8 (+8) Cha 10 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common	
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, broadsword, crossbow, 10 bolts	

8 Undeveloped Clones	Level 18 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 500 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
Initiative +12	Perception +9
AC 30, Fortitude 30, Reflex 30, Will 29	
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
④ Slam ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 16 damage, and the clone grabs the target (escape DC 23).	
Str 16 (+12)	Dex 16 (+12)
Con 12 (+10)	Int 10 (+9)
	Wis 10 (+9)
	Cha 12 (+10)
Alignment unaligned	Languages understands Common

Tactics: Ythrilnaw first opens all the pods in this room as a minor action, releasing the undeveloped clones within them. It relies on its minions and bodyguards to hold foes at bay while it uses the mechanical arm or *compulsion* to force victims into duplication pods. If pressed by foes, it attacks with *tentacles* and *mind blast*, saving *manipulate reality* in case it needs to flee.

The tanarukks block the staircases and use *burning cage* on any character who tries to move to the main platform. The clones flank with the tanarukks whenever possible.

If Ythrilnaw is forced to flee when confronted in area 10, it activates the clones in whichever part of area 9 the characters have yet to enter. The ulitharid then flees through that room, trusting the clones to hinder the party.

Ythrilnaw flees to area 8D, protecting the elder brain if it is still alive. Otherwise, it tries to evade the party in the Lunar Citadel, rallying any surviving thralls to mount a counterattack. If it has no allies to rally, Ythrilnaw attempts to recover the transit beacon and flee the citadel.

CONCLUSION

The characters can use the transit beacon as described in area 1 to return home. The adventure does not end there, though. The illithids might already have cloned and replaced many powerful individuals, and even with no more clones forthcoming, the mind flayers are free to activate their various sleepers and sow chaos in the world.

Any characters captured by the illithids are slated for cloning. They might escape the cells, but they must recover the transit beacon before they can return home. A darker plot might see the characters awakening in the world after capture, with no memory of what happened. Instead of searching for other agents, they must instead determine whether they are clones, and if they are somehow aiding the illithids' plans.

If Ythrilnaw is successful in its attempt to flee the citadel, the adventurers are stranded on the moon for three days while the ulitharid gathers Underdark allies, then returns to attack. While stranded, the characters can sustain themselves using the food dispensers in area 5D. If permanently stranded (perhaps because you decide to not have Ythrilnaw return, saving the ulitharid as a foe for a different day), another group with a transit beacon teleports to the citadel. What their motives might be is left to your discretion.

DOORS IN SPACE AND TIME

It is possible that the portals to the Lunar Citadel did more than transport the characters across a vast distance. The adventurers might also have traversed time or dimensions. A radical twist in the campaign could return the characters to a world that is different from the one they left. You might use this as an excuse to change the nature of your campaign in any way you see fit.

LOST RACE DEVICES

When items of the lost race are first discovered, their function is unclear. Witnessing a device's operation can still leave its means of control uncertain. Characters have to experiment with such devices.

Experimentation

A character can spend a short rest experimenting with a device, making an Intelligence check (moderate DC of the item's level) to determine the result. A character can attempt to use an item without experimentation, but doing so imposes a -10 penalty to the Intelligence check. A character receives a +2 bonus to the check if he or she has seen the device previously used, or if he or she is capable of understanding the language of the lost race.

Success: The character understands how to use the device and can use it.

Failure: The character fails to comprehend how to use the device and cannot benefit from its properties or activate its powers. The character can try again, with a cumulative -4 penalty to the check.

Failure by 5 or More: The character suffers the result of the device's malfunction property without needing any other trigger, such as rolling a 1 or suffering a critical hit. This consumes the item if it is consumable.

Dimension Hoops

Level 17 Uncommon

Each of these thin metal rings is approximately one foot in diameter. An emerald crystal slides freely around each hoop.

Wondrous Item 65,000 gp

Property

- ♦ These matched hoops are linked. When an object (up to a maximum of 15 pounds) is placed in one hoop, roll a d20. On a result of 2-20, the object placed in the hoop disappears and reappears in the other hoop instantly, regardless of the distance between them, as long as both hoops are on the same plane.
- ♦ **Malfunction:** On a result of 1 on the d20 roll, any creature adjacent to either hoop takes 10 force damage.

Evasion Shard

Level 20 Uncommon

This amber crystal warms quickly before drifting slowly from your grip to float overhead.

Head Slot 125,000 gp

Utility Power (Teleportation) ♦ **Encounter** (Immediate Interrupt)

Trigger: An attack hits you.

Effect: Roll a d20. On a result of 6-19, you teleport up to 5 squares. On a result of 20, you teleport up to 5 squares, and this power is not expended.

Malfunction: If you roll a 1-5, you take 15 damage and fall prone.

Greater Sleep Grenade

Level 16 Rare

This device is the size of a large apple, with indentations suitable for grasping.

Consumable 1,800 gp

✦ **Attack Power** (Charm) ♦ **Encounter** (Standard Action)

Attack: Area burst 2d3 - 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +19 vs. Will

Malfunction: If you roll a 1 on an attack roll with this grenade, you fall unconscious (save ends).

Hit: The target is slowed (save ends).

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead unconscious (save ends).

Nautiloid

Level 17 Uncommon

An opalescent nautilus shell houses a sluglike creature with fine tentacles. It radiates a sense of comfort.

Wondrous Item 65,000 gp

Property

Malfunction: If a critical hit is scored against you, the nautiloid emits a psychic scream. You and each creature within 10 squares of you take 10 psychic damage. If you take psychic damage from the critical hit, the nautiloid is also destroyed.

↩ **Utility Power** ♦ **At-Will** (Standard Action)

Effect: Close burst 10 (each creature carrying a nautiloid in the burst); you discern the target's emotional state, gaining a +4 power bonus to Insight checks against the target until the end of the encounter.

Utility Power ♦ **Daily** (Immediate Reaction)

Trigger: You take psychic damage.

Effect: You gain resist 10 psychic until the end of the encounter.

Portal Gun

Level 20 Rare

This elongated device resembles an armless crossbow with two handles. Blue energy shimmers over its surface, which is set with multicolored studs that periodically rise and recede.

Wondrous Item 125,000 gp

✦ **Utility Power** (Teleportation) ♦ **Encounter** (Standard Action)

Effect: Ranged 20 (2 unoccupied squares you can see); Roll a d20. On a result of 6-20, you create a portal in each target square. These portals persist until the end of the encounter or until you use a minor action to close them.

Any creature that steps into one portal teleports to an unoccupied square adjacent to the other portal. A portal cannot be used if no squares are unoccupied next to the other portal.

Malfunction: If you roll a 1-5, you and the creature nearest to you teleport, swapping places. You and the creature are then dazed (save ends).

Stimulant Injector

Level 17 Uncommon

A small grip is affixed to a narrow tube containing a bubbling blue liquid. A narrow hole at one end houses a small gleaming object.

Consumable 2,600 gp

Utility Power ♦ **Consumable** (Minor Action)

Effect: You use the injector and gain 15 temporary hit points. Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +2 power bonus to speed.

Malfunction: If a critical hit is scored against you while you are under this power's effect, you must take a standard action on each of your turns either to make a basic attack against a random creature or to charge it (save ends). If no creature is within range, you lose that action.

THINGAMAJIGS

For more technological devices you can add to the treasure in the Lunar Citadel, check out "Bazaar of the Bizarre: Thingamajigs of the Barrier Peaks" by Dave Chalker in *Dragon* 410. The items presented in this adventure work similarly to those thingamajigs, and the experimentation system in this adventure can be used with those items.

If you'd like to use the stability system from the article with the items in this adventure, here are the stability ratings.

Dimension hoops	+1
Evasion shard	+2
Greater sleep grenade	-4
Nautiloid	+4
Portal gun	-3
Stimulant injector	+3

About the Author

John “Ross” Rossomangno is a freelance writer whose debut adventure, “The Devil’s Due,” appeared in *Dungeon* 188. He also created “Going Ape!” in *Dungeon* 192 and “Reflections of Ruin” in *Dungeon* 196. His days are spent at the keyboard in an ongoing effort to expand his writing credits.

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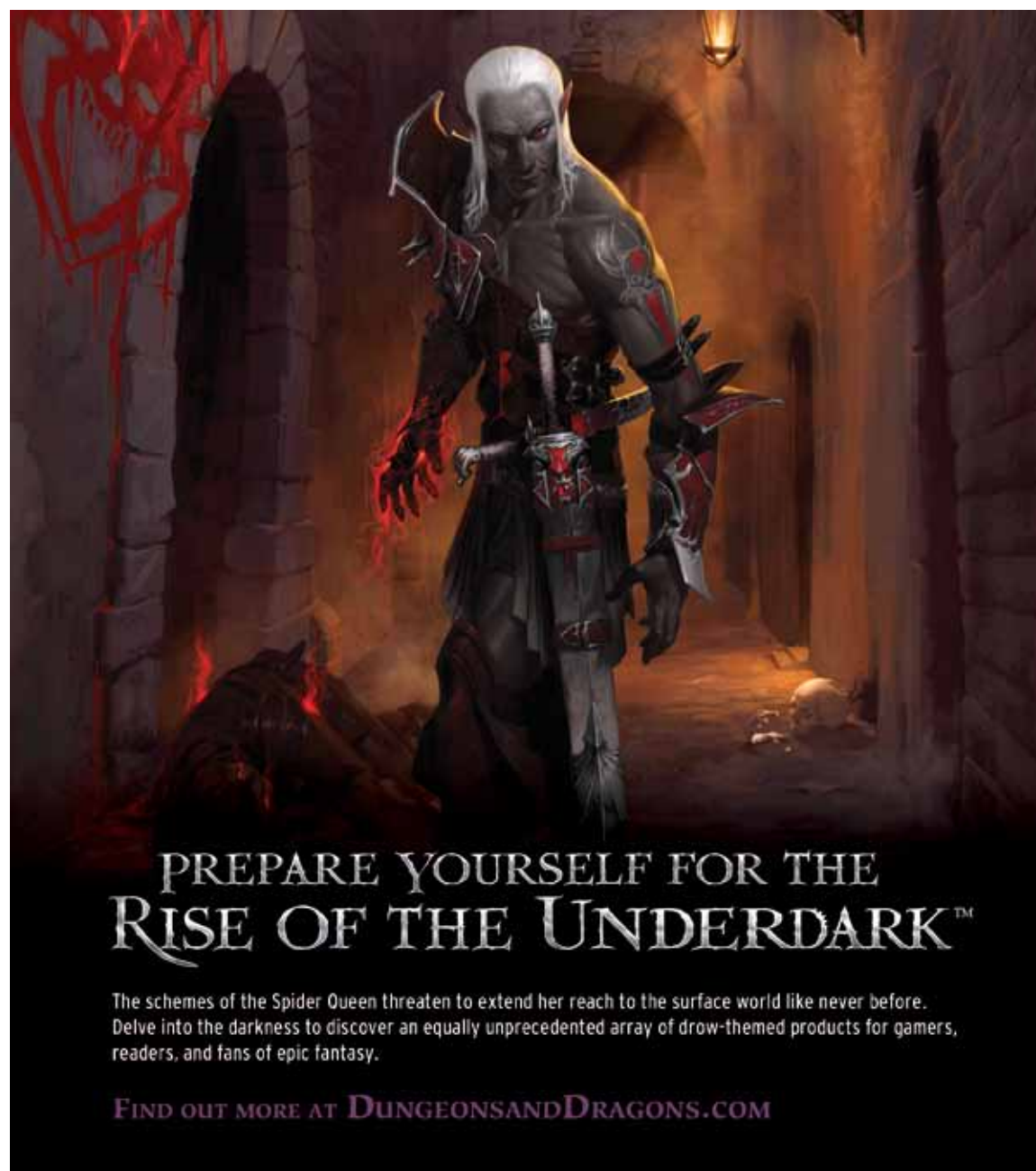
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Tomb of Meowers

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE

illustration by William O'Conner

I lied. Big deal. As my mom would say, “call a cop.” And maybe you should, because I fear where this Gamma World addiction will lead me next.

I said I wasn’t going to write about Gamma World again. I even told my editor that.

“Good,” he said. “I mean, no offense, but people are going to start thinking you work here.”

But what was I supposed to do with all of these characters? I now had maybe 40. 45. OK, 57 if you’re counting. And I love them all. So much so that I couldn’t bring myself to throw them into some nutso, war-ravaged, radiation-filled death trap. I mean, come on. I grew up best friends with a stuffed rabbit named Cornfeet and three invisible monsters. Is it so hard to fathom my love for a hawkoid plant?

Later that evening I talked to Bart, my carpool buddy, about my flock of Gamma World characters looking for adventure and their overprotective mother.

“I can’t stop creating characters,” I lamented. “And yet they have nothing to do.”

“That’s crazy,” Bart argued. “I love my characters *because* of the crazy stuff they do. I can’t rip a magical coin out of a zombie’s neck in real life, but I can in a D&D game.”

It’s true. Bart does get all willy-nilly with his characters. After all, this is the same guy who thought a wall-mounted candelabra would make a cool night-light for a kid.

The one thing we did agree on is that Gamma World characters aren’t just fun to make—they’re fun to hear about.

“Great!” I said, hoping he’d say that. “They’re in the backseat if you want to meet them.”

“Um, Shelly, you realize no one is there, right?” he asked. “Unless you managed to create a sentient pile of dirty gym clothes.”

“Are those still in here? I thought an errant avocado rolled under the seat or something.” It would have explained the smell.

As he read the character sheets of my most recent creations, Bart decreed that having a bunch of perfectly mutated characters with nothing to do is almost as bad as having a perfectly good adventure but no one to run it for.

“When I was in fifth grade, I read *Tomb of Horrors* for the first time,” he said. “I’ve probably read it a hundred more times since then but never had a chance to run it.” He said this all dreamy-eyed like he



was expressing his wish to climb Mount Everest, save a whale, or audition for *Survivor*.

That's when I had my first brilliant idea of the day. I had a veggie lasagna in the freezer and a case of homebrew beer I was saving for a rainy Saturday. It was perfect! My bevy of Gamma World characters would explore the *Tomb of Horrors*.

I couldn't wait to get that pile of gym clothes and me home to sort out my dream team line up of characters to explore the infamous tomb. Bart said I should plan on bringing at least ten to the table.

"And not ones you're attached to," he warned.

Hmm... maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

* * *

Whenever I cross the threshold of my condo, Zelda, my cat, gets an attack of opportunity. Today was no different.

"Quit it, Zelda!" I shouted, using my Luxe handbag as a shield. What would Marc Jacobs say?

Anyone who knows me (or her) or is friends with me (or her) on Facebook knows we have a rather

tempestuous relationship. She is bossy and vindictive and takes up way too much space on the bed. She also takes great pleasure in sneaking up behind me and digging her death claws into my calves or the backs of my arms. Once I had to beat her off my triceps with a fork. I am told by people with cats that this is what cats do. *Really?*

Zelda wasn't supposed to be my cat. She belonged to my friend and I was her cat sitter. Then one day he came back from vacation and told me he met another cat and didn't want Zelda anymore.

"We never really connected," he explained. "She seems to like you much more."

While that may be true, I didn't want a cat *permanently*. I wanted to get another dog. Maybe two more. But what choice did I have? It was my way or the Humane Society's way. And this is how I get thanked. I hate to say it, but cats kind of suck.

As if reading my thoughts, Zelda raced around to attack my shins. Thankfully I was wearing tall boots.

"Ingrate!" I scolded. "A dog would never get away with this." But because I proved to be an unworthy opponent, she quickly became bored and moved on to the couch to lick my epidermis off her claws.

"You think you're so tough?" I asked. "I should send you to the *Tomb of Horrors*."

That's when I got my second brilliant idea of the day. I *would* send her to the *Tomb of Horrors*! Who but a party of cats would make for a better adventuring team? They're stealthy, fearless, and they pack a mean weapon. This would be my chance to *finally* play some Gamma World characters I wouldn't get attached to. I got to work on crafting the perfect felinoid party.

Zelda, sensing I was doing something fun, spread herself over my lap and attacked my fingers as I wrote.

"Move it, catface," I commanded her, flipping to the appropriate page in the rulebook. "You're getting a make-over."

Giant felinoid!

"That's you, Zelda," I said and immediately felt bad. Not everything's fair in love and war and weight issues are one of them.

The next three combinations I created were felinoid mind coercer, electrokinetic, and pyrokinetic. A perfectly rounded party of cats if you ask me.

Zelda wouldn't adventure with just anyone. Monster is my friend Roxy's cat. He's a big gray beast with a nasty disposition. But who can resist a grossly overweight furball rolling around on his back? Not me. Once when I was over for dinner, I thought he was in a compromising position, like a turtle, so I went to help him ... and he hauled off and slapped me.

"Roxy!" I yelled. "Your cat just hit me!"

"Oh, he does that," she said. "He's just playing."

His playing resulted in a 4-inch scratch, millimeters from my eyeball. What is with you cat people?

The next party kitten was Maddux—a gigantic, shaved, toothless Maine Coon belonging to my friend Bre. You know that super tall kid in school who sucked at basketball? That's Maddux. As big as he is, he's timid as a field mouse, even hiding under the bed whenever someone turns on the oven. (Admittedly, that may be a testament to Bre's cooking and not his fortitude; he's afraid of the smoke detector.)

However timid he may be when it comes to kitchen appliances, he is not shy about food. His stepdad (who incidentally is Zelda's old dad. I know...

such a tangled web) made a huge feast of caprese salad and risotto using the saffron I smuggled back from the Spice Market in Istanbul. Apparently Maddux was looking forward to this meal as much as I was, because no sooner had I lifted my fork than that furball's giant, fluffy head was whisker-deep in my bowl.

"EW!" I shouted at Bre. "Your cat is eating my risotto!"

Know what she did? *Took his picture!* Come on, cat people!

Rounding out the party was Blanche, a small, white, rules-abiding kitty. I don't actually know Blanche, at least not personally. I met her on my way to Greenlake for a run. Her strategy is much like Monster's only she would gladly take the belly rub over a sucker punch. She ran in front of me, rolled on her back, and meowed loudly. I stopped to give her some rubs then moved on, but she followed me and dropped in my path again every few feet. As determined as she was to get some belly rubs, she refused to cross the street when I did. It was like she got caught on a kitty-proof barbed wire fence, the way she teetered there on the curb.

"I guess you have some boundaries, Miss Blanche," I noted.

Her boundaries, however, included *directly in my path* as I was about to step off the curb. Not wanting to squish her (well, sort of) I was forced to do a side-step lunge combination that ended up tweaking my hamstring so bad I had to see a chiropractor for months. Can I sue a cat for back co-pays?

* * *



When game time rolled around, Bart and I were downright giddy. Could that be in part to the empty bottles of beer littering my dining room table? (Drinking homebrew when playing D&D with cats is kind of essential.) I couldn't wait to put these kitties through their paces.

Bart made a few amendments to the adventure to accommodate the Gamma World characters. I was none the wiser, never having gone near the *Tomb of Horrors*, but I've heard the stories and lamented the fallen heroes. My friends would kill me if they knew what I was about to do to their beloved animal companions.

Bart doled out Alpha mutation cards to the party. Blanche got a force ax, Maddux got a pair of jet boots,

Monster could turn your brain into gray paste with a shriek and Zelda got a pair of wings.

"Scary," I said, thinking of Zelda hovering above me. "Those better be some sturdy wings."

The adventure began in a high-tech lab. At the center of the lab was a brain in a jar.

"Meet Mommy Brain," Bart said.

I have a feeling that's supposed to be me. Bart better not kill me.

Zelda had been called forth to help with a super-secret mission.

"Well, the adventure stops here," I said. "Saying you want her to do something is the best way to ensure she won't do it."

"Then Mommy Brain tells Zelda to not go anywhere near the dreaded *Tomb of Horrors*. Do not seek out the powerful Omega Tech treasure rumored to lie within."

"Treasure doesn't tempt her. Trader Joe's tuna on the other hand ..."

"Do not seek out the bounties of canned tuna or attempt to bring down the almighty, slobbering lich, Acereruff."

"Acereruff?" I asked, looking at Sadie, Bart's old, arthritic pit bull mix lying in wait under the table.

Bart gave Sadie a rub with his foot. "I didn't want her to feel left out."

"Oh, okay, Zelda's in," I said. "Anything to spite Sadie."

"You will need a team of your best agents," the Mommy Brain told Zelda.

"I find it odd that you're essentially playing *me*," I said. "If I'm Mommy Brain, shouldn't I be telling Z what do to?"



Bart laughed. “When have you ever been able to tell Zelda what to do?”

True, true.

I had to admit, I was feeling a little remorseful at the thought of one of these innocent cats (and Zelda) biting the big cat nip mousie due to my errant roleplaying.

“Oh, don’t worry,” Bart said. “They won’t die. They have nine lives, remember? They’ll be transported back to the lab where Mommy Brain reincarnates them.”

I guess that would be OK.

Also to assist with their journey, Mommy Brain gave the party a bomb disposal robot. The cats christened it Whiskers.

“Sweet!” None of my friends have pet robots.

The adventurers set forth down a very familiar hall.

“Two jackal-like creatures carved into the wall appear to be holding a bronze chest,” Bart began.

“Get up there and check it out, Blanche,” Zelda commanded.

“You really think one of your living, breathing, fur and blood party-mates is the best choice?” Bart asked. Oh, right! The robot!

Whiskers moved forward and discovered a lever.

“Pull it,” Zelda shouted.

Like they say, curiosity killed the cat. I guess that’s good news for the robot.

After a Perception check that only Blanche was paying attention for, a pit trap just a few feet from the party was discovered.

“Back up, Blanche!” Zelda commanded, which is kind of *duh*. I mean, even a cat wouldn’t deliberately step in a hole. A robot on the other hand ...

“Unfortunately, the trap is right where Whiskers was standing,” Bart said, not feeling unfortunate in the least. “He falls on poison spikes causing 34 damage.”

Holy cats! I almost wish we were in the Shadowfell.

“That seems kind of dramatic for two minutes into an adventure.”

“Welcome to the *Tomb of Horrors*,” he said.

Although Zelda had wings, she insisted Maddux use his jet boots to retrieve the robot (along with some diamonds and a gravity hammer). Whiskers was bruised and pretty beaten but thanks to Maddux’s mechanics skills, he was rolling again. This time when the cats continued down the path, they put Whiskers first. Great in theory—he’s meant to take the brunt of it, but he lacks some important skills.

“And Whiskers goes down again,” Bart said after the next pit trap. “Not too perceptive, is he?”

Maddux pulled him back up to safety and got him moving again—this time in the middle of the pack.

For a scaredy cat with no teeth, Maddux proved to be a pretty solid adventurer. Thanks to his Perception checks, the party skirted the remaining pit traps and made it all the way to the end of the hallway. Yes, I’ve seen that green devil head a zillion times but standing in front of it, even as a cat, gave me the chills.

“Well, it seems like one of you should go through it,” said Zelda, the fearless, careless leader.

They attached a lantern to Whiskers’ arm and sent him in to check things out. He crossed the threshold of the devil’s mouth, and his outstretched illuminated limb went dark immediately.

“What happened?”

Monster yanked out what appeared to be 50% less robot.

“Whiskers is gone?” I shouted. “Well, mostly.”

And with that, the robot keeled over and died.

Zelda (the real Zelda) chose that moment of weakness to jump onto the dining room table and stick her face in a bowl of salsa. She’s not allowed on the table and certainly not *in* my food (at least not when guests are present) but I scratched her head in favor of yelling at her. *There could be 50% less Zelda.*

“Is that a can opener I hear?” I asked. “Looks like Mommy Brain wants the kitties to come home.”

“No way!” Bart shouted. “This is just the beginning! And they’ve already gone farther than most.”

Clearly *someone* has beer muscles.

“Haven’t you heard of leaving well enough alone?” I asked. “I mean, they’re cats. They probably need a nap by now. Let’s have them rest.”

“Let’s have them explore one more room,” Bart urged. He too is a dog person.

The cats turned their attention to the stone archway with the glowing stones just left of the misty pile



5
**Monster (with Omega Tech cape),
operating the Misty Archway**

of debris that was once Whiskers. It did not look any more promising.

“Hey, I have an idea!” I said. “Why don’t I just put these cats in a plastic sack and send them down the river?”

I must have looked pretty woeful, because Bart offered a tip.

“Maybe Maddux wants to use some of his science skills to figure out what to do with these stones.”

I sighed. “Maybe Maddux wants to eat a pan of lasagna. Like Garfield.”

But Bre would have been proud. Maddux was by far the most perceptive and skilled feline on this trip, and I was secretly mad at him for gaining enough knowledge to keep encouraging the party. After six failed attempts at color-coding, Monster finally found the right combo, causing the mist to disappear and reveal a smooth stone-walled chamber beyond.

“Nothing but an empty room,” Maddux told the group.

And *whoosh!* Once they stepped inside, the party was teleported to said empty room. Only the room wasn’t empty. Maddux noticed a statue.

“Oh, an arm that looks like it belonged to a statue.” He pointed to the broken statue arm on the ground.

Zelda wasn’t buying it.

“It can’t be just a statue, stupid,” she claimed. “And that’s not just an arm. Jeez, do I have to do everything?”

Zelda punctuated this statement in real life by rolling over on her side and bunny-kicking my wrist.

“I think Zelda just took the statue’s arm,” I told Bart, before getting up to find the Neosporin. “And now it’s bleeding.”

She handed the statue arm to Blanche and I held my breath. There was some trick to it I knew, but I really wanted the cats to go home.

Something was definitely weird here. And not just in a post-apocalypse/feline survivors sort of way. I was punishing a bunch of cats by making them explore perhaps the most deadly D&D setting in its history. I was bleeding on my dice, my cat was eating my nachos, and I was about to blubber into my lasagna over the thought of Zelda being scared and bushy-tailed in that tomb, clawing at the stone walls trying to get back to my featherbed. Oh no! What had the *Tomb of Horrors* done to me?

“Do you want to continue?” Bart asked, opening another bottle of beer. “And investigate the statue?”

What choice did I have? I couldn’t go on like this. I’m a dog person!

“Yes, onward!” I said. “But Zelda stays in the back.”

About the Author:

Shelly Mazzanoble dedicates this column to Monster. Get better soon, buddy! You’ll be punching and slapping in no time!

The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

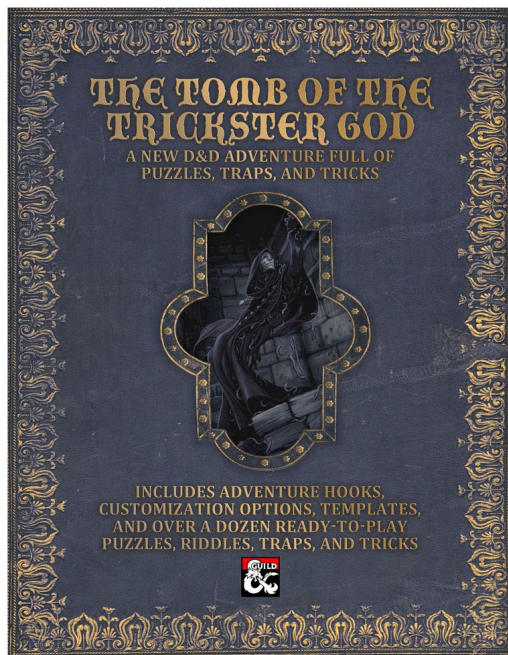
Highlighting puzzles and artifacts in celebration of Tasha's upcoming fifth edition companion.



You'd need to have critically failed your Wisdom Perception check to have missed the substantial utensil that's currently cooking up a storm of fifth edition content. *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* is bubbling with amazing new additions such as character mechanics, sidekicks, and supernatural environments, as well as readymade puzzles for DMs and powerful artifacts. In honor of its upcoming release on November 17, 2020 we're taking a look at some of the best **puzzles** and **artifacts** constructed by DMs Guild authors.

PUZZLES

Puzzles can add an extra kick to even the spiciest campaigns, and DMs Guild authors have created a multitude of them to both mentally exert and entertain your players. There's nothing like seeing the look on someone's face as they help their party overcome a perplexing poser.



**The Tomb of the Trickster God:
Puzzles, Tricks, and Traps, by
Marshall Watson**
Price: \$2 (PDF)

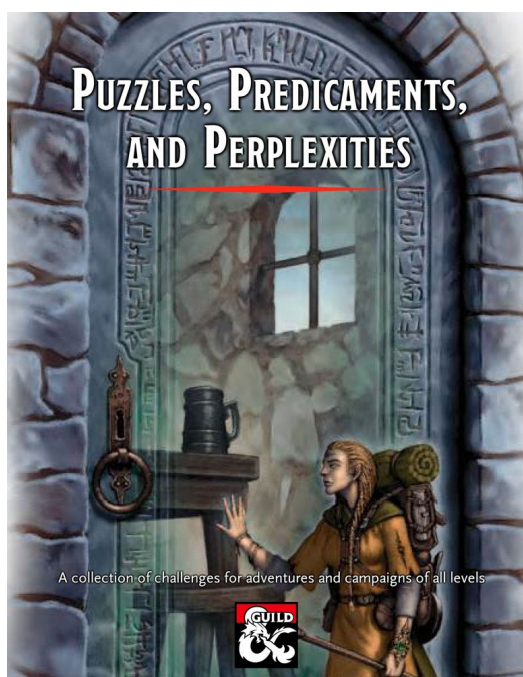
This customizable D&D adventure module can be run as a modified dungeon crawl featuring twelve consecutive rooms leading to a (very) deserved treasure hoard, or DMs might alternatively pick and choose from the list of tricky encounters and slot them into an existing story. Packed full of puzzles, riddles, tricks, and traps, its images and templates are

provided in an appendix for easy printing.

MORE INFO

**Puzzles, Predicaments, and
Perplexities, by Steve “Jaspor”
Orr and Bill Putrino**
Price: \$4.99 (PDF)

This collection of ten puzzles confirms that a sharp mind is just as important as a sharp sword. Helpful hints are provided to direct players towards the solution without completely giving the answer away, as they tackle everything from simple lever pulls



and pressure plate navigation to key turns and keywords. A random table of triggered spell traps based on party level adds further danger.

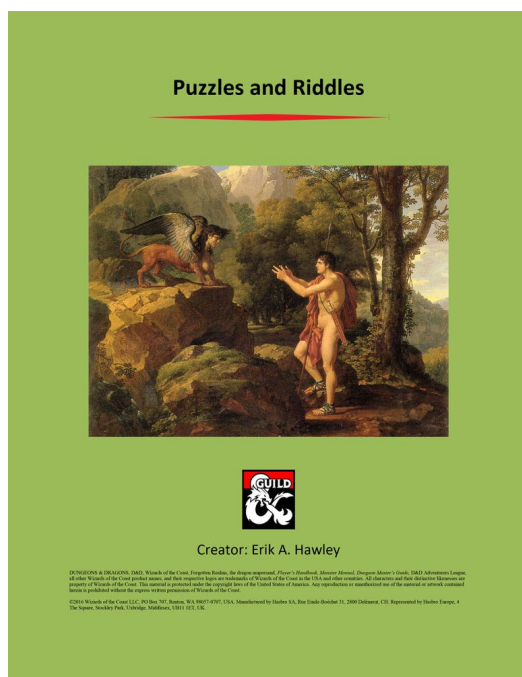
[MORE INFO](#)



Puzzles for Players, by Mark Clark
Price: PWYW \$2.95 suggested (PDF)

Cloverkin's cool cover art leads into a collection of twenty templates to help DMs integrate puzzles into any game world. Challenges are categorized at three levels of scale: Encounter/Room (a one-shot problem), Module/Dungeon (requires parts in multiple locations to be solved), and Campaign/World (set across larger environments such as continents or planes of existence). Updated to include a black and white edition to easily print a physical copy of the PDF.

[MORE INFO](#)



Puzzles and Riddles, by Erik Hawley

Price: \$0.99 (PDF)

Erik Hawley's lo-fi PDF collecting riddles and puzzles is an inexpensive way of injecting some mystique into your D&D game. The large collection of word-based puzzles offers something for almost every occasion, while the easy to replicate brainteasers can quickly be added to any adventure.

[MORE INFO](#)

DESIGN THOUGHT: PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Puzzles present an interesting challenge in Dungeons & Dragons. You wouldn't ask the players around your table (and you can't ask the players on your Zoom call) to actually fight a bunch of people LARP-style, so combat is resolved using a dice roll. Why wouldn't puzzles be handled in the same way?

The benefit of handing players a puzzle box or posing a simple problem using coins or other props is the joy when they solve it. Sure, the character with the highest Intelligence would scoff at such child's play but the person controlling that character gets a huge amount of satisfaction from finding the solution to a tricky problem.

Puzzles mostly act as a barrier. Either they're designed to keep out interlopers with low intelligence or they're supposed to only allow entry to those who have memorized or recorded the solution. If you're using a puzzle to deny your players access to a setting or room, it's best to find another way. It's incredibly frustrating to waste time on a challenge that won't deliver a satisfactory result.

There are some useful guidelines to help successfully integrate puzzles into your game. First, the players must recognize that what they're facing is a puzzle in order to avoid stalling the game. Most puzzles will also have a set result: the reconstructed key fits the lock, the correct selection of lever pulls opens the secret door, guessing the sequence of turns opens the box.

For puzzles that rely on a sequence, the solution can be planted or hinted at before the players even approach it. The fun can also be in the exploration. Using a sequence that the players can attempt to solve without dying (even if they take some damage or there's a consequence to their actions) can make them more invested in solving it. Instant death by incorrect button press is less likely to grab their interest.

It also helps when players are struggling if a puzzle includes hints that don't simply give away the answer. Finally, if the solution is beyond the grasp of your players, that's when the character with high Intelligence might roll to see if they can solve it in game.



Q&A: REMLEY FARR AND JEFF C. STEVENS

With All Hallows Eve only a few weeks away, we turned to two of

the most successful horror writers on the DMs Guild to find out what makes a good scary story. The pair chatted with *Dragon+* about the badge of honor that comes from making players pee their pants.

How did the two of you come to work together on projects for the DMs Guild?

Jeff C. Stevens (JCS): I've been a fan of Remley's work for quite some time. I read *The Sun Goes Down with a Ruby Smile* and *Seized Fire for the Ceasefire*, and both the writing and the stories are fantastic. The *Sun Goes Down* in particular is a beautiful piece. I was trying to coax him into making a little money off his work because it was so good. At that time Remley had everything listed as Pay What You Want on the Dungeon Master's Guild. We finally worked together when I reached out to him to write a piece for *Encounters in the Savage Wilderness*, which is part of my *Savage Encounters* series of books.

I then came up with the idea for *The Madhouse of Tasha's Kiss*, which is a maddening adventure [and not to be confused with the upcoming official D&D sourcebook *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything!*]. I was confident that I could tell the story well but I also knew that Remley could help me tell it, as he brings a flair and a horror style. We worked so well together and that adventure performed so well that we followed it up with *Happy Jack's Funhouse* the following year. Those two adventures are the most popular works I've ever uploaded to the DMs Guild.

How do you split up the workload?

JCS: For *Happy Jack's Funhouse* I wrote the intro and some wider material and Remley took control of the majority of the interior. He created all the little things that players come across, such as the ball pit. Then I went a little crazy with the final battle and came up with the Candyland scenario, and designed some additional actions for Jack. That's where his ability to throw a jack-in-the-box to distract you while you're making your attacks comes from. We've created some cool items for that scenario, including the boomstick, Jack's floppy shoes, and a chainsaw.

What was the initial idea behind *The Madhouse of Tasha's Kiss*?

JCS: I had this vision of a bard whose favorite spell was *Tasha's hideous laughter*. The name she took as a performer is Tasha's Kiss,

in honor of that spell. She's somehow possessed by a demon, which opens its own pocket dimension and uses Tasha's Kiss's wagon as the portal into it. What's inside is a madhouse in every sense. We've even included rules allowing the characters to experience short-term or long-term madness while playing the adventure.

And how did the idea for *Happy Jack's Funhouse* follow on from that?

JCS: *Happy Jack's Funhouse* was probably influenced by Stephen King's *It*, which features a clown with very big teeth.

Remley Farr (RF): It was strategically released a month before the sequel to the movie came out.

JCS: It wasn't necessarily planned that way. I base a lot of my work on images and cool cover art, and what's better than a clown with big old teeth.

One-Shot Onslaught told us a good cover has an impact and will always get them to click on a module on the DMs Guild...

JCS: A good cover and a good title definitely draw people to the product.

RF: The first thing Jeff sends me for a new project is the cover art: "Here's what we're working with."

JCS: It helps with inspiration. When I spoke to Remley about that cover, he told me he used to work in something like a carnival.

RF: I did some volunteer work for a little haunted house in my hometown. If you want to learn profanity, work at a haunted house. It's fantastic.

And you also included a possible connection between the two modules?

JCS: We make suggestions on how DMs could link the two and we also include foreshadowing to the second adventure. In *Happy Jack's Funhouse* there are a couple of points where we mention *The Madhouse of Tasha's Kiss*, providing an easy link between the two.



What's the key to writing a successful horror adventure? What elements do you need to include?

JCS: You need all of the traditional D&D elements, including exploration, roleplay, and combat.

RF: It's sometimes fun to keep the *Monster Manual* tucked away so that when you describe a new encounter, the party don't know what the heck it is. I've learned that one of the best ways to unnerve people is to throw something at them that they're not familiar with. I don't know if there's an existing term for it, but I like to call it the "Vampire Theory".

When you think about a vampire, none of the mythos really makes sense. And if you explain the concept of a vampire to someone who is unfamiliar with it, they're going to scratch their head and think it's a strange monster. Why does it have to be invited in? Why is a stake to the heart the only thing that kills it? And why can running water block its path? Yet all of these interesting rules can slowly be figured out. When I create a monster, I wonder if it also has strange rules that it follows so those encountering it can try to apply some sense to it.

That's what I like about Chimera Chron from *The Madhouse of Tasha's Kiss*. It hits players where they really don't want to be hit by messing with the storylines of their characters. Chimera Kron eats memories and puts new ones in their head. Your character might forget that they have loving parents and instead remember that a

money lender has hired a dragon debt collector to settle your account! It's fun to mess with their precious little PCs.

Is horror in RPGs more about creating atmosphere and classic scares than it is the kind of physical, near-unkillable threats you'd see in something like a *Friday the 13th* movie?

RF: You especially need a sense of mystery and the unknown. That stacks on top of my concept of throwing in a monster or creature that your players haven't seen before.

JCS: It's also important to have a really good story. Simply wandering through a haunted house until you meet a witch doesn't make much sense unless you know exactly what occurred. What made this place haunted? I like to reveal elements of the story throughout so the characters can glean what happened to cause this horror scenario and perhaps get a hint of what the final battle might be. You can also layer in potential future tie-ins. We're working on *Annalyse's Revenge* right now. Annalyse is the girlfriend of Happy Jack and is mentioned in *Happy Jack's Funhouse*.

If the horror becomes part of the story, does that make the payoff at the end of the adventure more impactful? And might it also end without combat, if characters empathize with the witch now they have an idea of her life story and whether she was wronged or she wronged other people?

JCS: Maybe you can connect with her and talk her out of it or heal her somehow. I don't think that's going to be possible with Jack!

Do you also play with the traditional format of an adventure to take players further out of their comfort zones?

JCS: A lot of Remley's work uses random tables creating random effects, so neither the adventurers nor the DM always know what's going to happen. This can include events that are wildly out of the ordinary. We've got an exploding ball pit in *Happy Jack's Funhouse* and an immortal pig that keeps wading through it blowing up the balls. Odd things like that can unnerve the players.

RF: In *Happy Jack's Funhouse* there are also technically seven different directions they can take from the starting point. A lot of adventures have a set beginning, middle and end but *Happy Jack's Funhouse* is very different. Depending on which doors you open and what paths you take, the adventure could be completed within two

hours or it might take ten! That's one thing I love about it. The PCs can be as lost as heck in this weird world and find themselves thinking, "How do we get out?"

JCS: I've heard people play it both ways. Some players go in and take care of it and get out. And other people want their party to experience the entire adventure and make a point of going into every room, which is cool.

How scary is too scary?

JCS: I'm not as scared of clowns as some people are but when I tweeted out the cover image for *Happy Jack's Funhouse* some people said it should come with a disclaimer or warning: "If you're scared of clowns, don't look at this!"

RF: I consider that a victory.

JCS: I'm putting a disclaimer on *Annalyse's Revenge*. It's pretty dark and gory.

RF: For me it's a badge of honor if players freak out a little as they're wandering through the adventure. When I worked at the local haunted house, we considered a night a success after making two people pee their pants—that was a good night! I didn't want to edit anything out of that module once it was available so we updated the disclaimer to say, "This adventure contains..." It's not censoring it by any means. It's just letting people know what to expect.

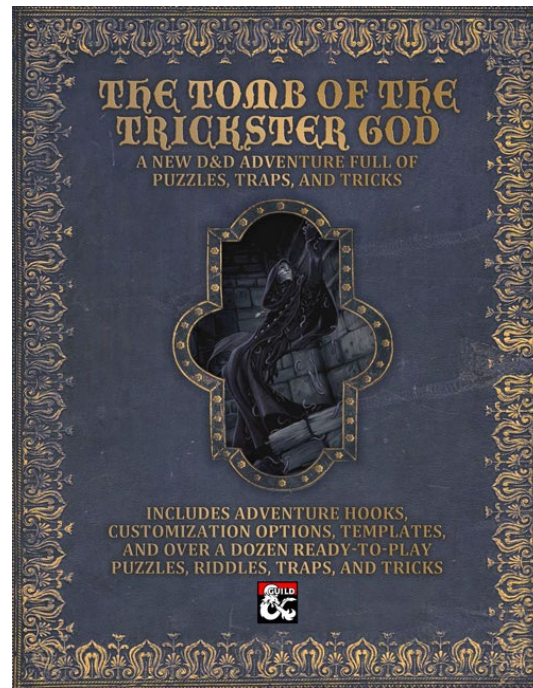
JCS: We want to appeal to a large audience so not all of our products are going to be horror! We're currently working on *Blinsky's Toy Shop*, where Blinsky inherits enough money to build his own shop at Lake Zarovich. Naturally, the toy shop becomes a little strange.

RF: That will be much more lighthearted. Most of the material I've written for it so far is just goofy. It's more spooky than scary.

The Madhouse of Tasha's Kiss, *Happy Jack's Funhouse* and *Blinsky's Toy Shop* are available now and you can find more fifth edition content from **Remley Farr** and **Jeff C. Stevens** on the DMs Guild.

Download The Tomb of the Trickster God for free!

Over the years, stories of the Trickster God—his exploits, his interventions, his influence—have spread through various kingdoms. Some versions contain veins of truth, crediting the Trickster God for the exploits (or failures) of others, while some serve as lessons on the corrupting powers of greed and vanity. But they all end the same: a dead man, a hidden tomb, and the lure of long-lost treasure. Only a scant few ever knew the truth about the Trickster God (who he was, what he did, and where his body rests) and none who have sought after his fortune have ever returned...



As a special treat this issue, we're giving you the chance to download the PDF version, which will be free for the life of this issue.

[DOWNLOAD THE FREE PDF](#)

FIRESIDE WITH PETER ADKISON

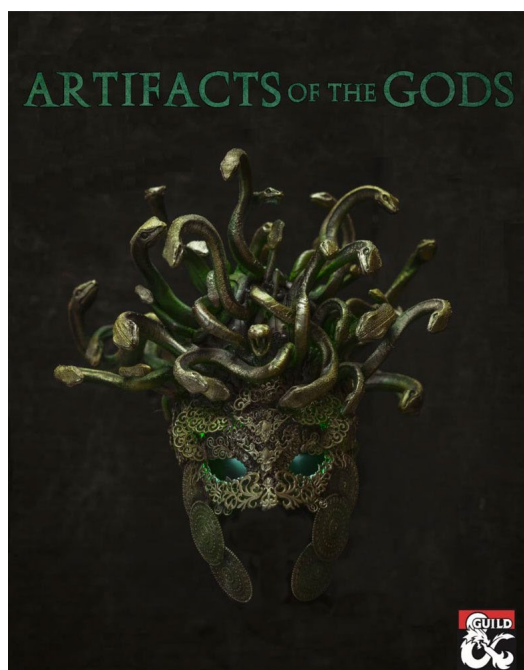
You might be familiar with Wizards of the Coast founder and CEO of Gen Con Peter Adkison's fireside chats with the early creators of Dungeons & Dragons and *Magic: The Gathering*. In the newest season of *Fireside with Peter Adkison*, presented by the Dungeon Masters Guild, Peter talks to pivotal writers, editors, designers, and others creating a new wave of Dungeons & Dragons. His first interview in the series is with Celeste Conowitch, DMs Guild Adept and one of the contributing designers for *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*.



ARTIFACTS

There's an unwritten contract that exists between adventurers and the Dungeon Master: defeat baddies, get treasure! The bigger the baddies defeated, the more impressive the items recovered should be.

Artifacts may eventually find their way into the hands of the most powerful heroes and the DMs Guild has plenty to choose from...

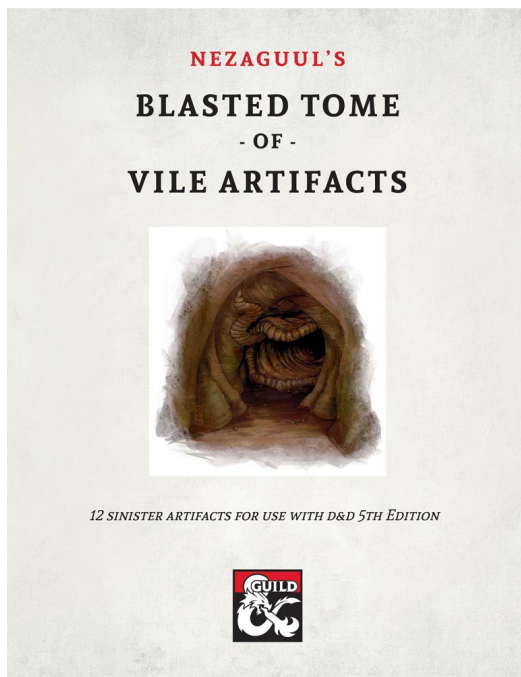


Artifacts of the Gods, by T.A. Gray
Price: \$2.95 (PDF)

This collection expands on the weapons of the gods provided in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*, adding thirty further weapons, armor, clothing, and other items. All helpfully listed by deity and complying with Theros' Piety system, these powerful items would benefit any high-level campaign. Rules expanding the Minor and Major Beneficial Properties bestowed by artifacts

also build on those provided in the *DMG*.

[LEARN MORE](#)

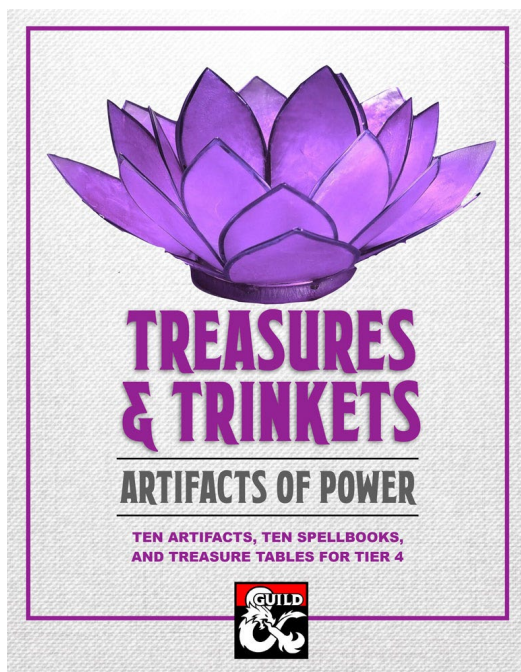


Nezaguul's Blasted Tome of Vile Artifacts, by Nick Chira
Price: \$0.50 (PDF)

“Remember, the abyss awaits us all,” Nezaguul signs off in the foreword to this collection of twelve sinister artifacts, giving you some idea as to their nastiness (for example, if the wearer of the *plate of thorns* stands in the blood of a slain enemy, they may regain one hit dice of health). However, characters must pay a price to wield such power, braving a roll on the Table of Vile Attunement

Effects.

[LEARN MORE](#)

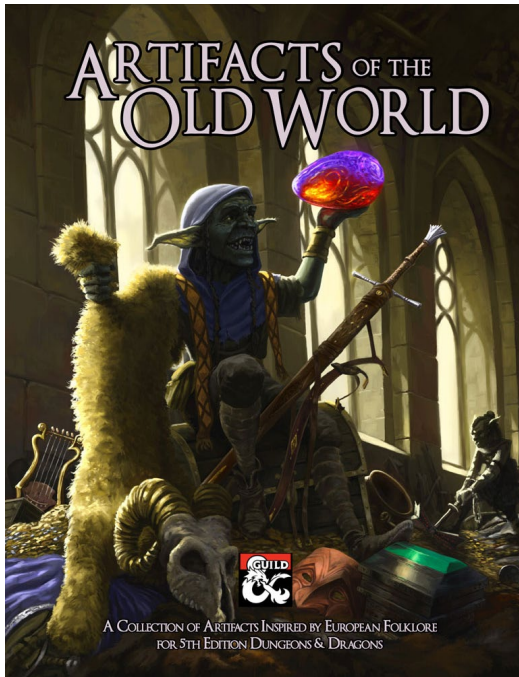


Treasures and Trinkets: Artifacts of Power for Tier 4, by Troy Taylor
Price: \$2.99 (PDF)

This supplement to help DMs stock their dungeons prides itself on being steeped in Forgotten Realms lore. Alongside major items such as *Athar's Tabard*, *Fangs of Sarrukh*, *Chimes of Eldath*, and *Shadesword of Naramus*, it also aims to help time-crunched DMs quickly generate loot using treasure

parcels and random matrixes.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Artifacts of the Old World, by
Nikolas Totief, Alessio Bran
Petrosino, Andrea Maffia, Aris
Bizos, Catherine Evans, Christian
Eichhorn, C. M. O'Halloran,
Daniele Severin, Darren Kenny,
Green Bird RPGs, Luca Maffia,
Jason Bakos, Magnus Vogel,
Massimo Tartaro, Matthew
Whitby, and Miłosz Gawęcki
Price: \$12.95 (PDF)

The “Old World” referenced in the
title is our world, as this
supplement lists magical items
that have been inspired by Baltic,
English, Germanic, Greek, Irish,

Italian, Norse, Slavic, and Welsh folklore and fairytales. Its multi-
national team of writers, artists, and editors have created more than
130 unique items in a bid to introduce DMs and players to stories
they may never have encountered before.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Artifacts of Legend, by Brian
Coon
Price: PWYW \$1 suggested (PDF)

Fans of *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the
Rings*, and *Legend of Zelda*
(among others) might spot some
inspiration in the forty-two new
magical items, two sentient items,
five artifacts, and one epic boon
collected here. As impressive as



the artifacts are, other fab additions include wondrous items such as the *friendship locket* and *monster box*, and legendary greatsword *Hackmaster*.

[LEARN MORE](#)

SUPPORT RED NOSE DAY!



Wizards of the Coast has released a fifth edition D&D adventure—available only on the DMs Guild! *Return to the Glory* is designed for four-to-six orc characters from 6th to 8th level. Your people once dominated everything south of the mountains; you had the greatest, most advanced underground stronghold ever known to orc-kind. Then the cataclysm happened. Centuries have passed, and only a few tribes have survived. Now assembled under the banner of one cause, can you reclaim what was once yours! All

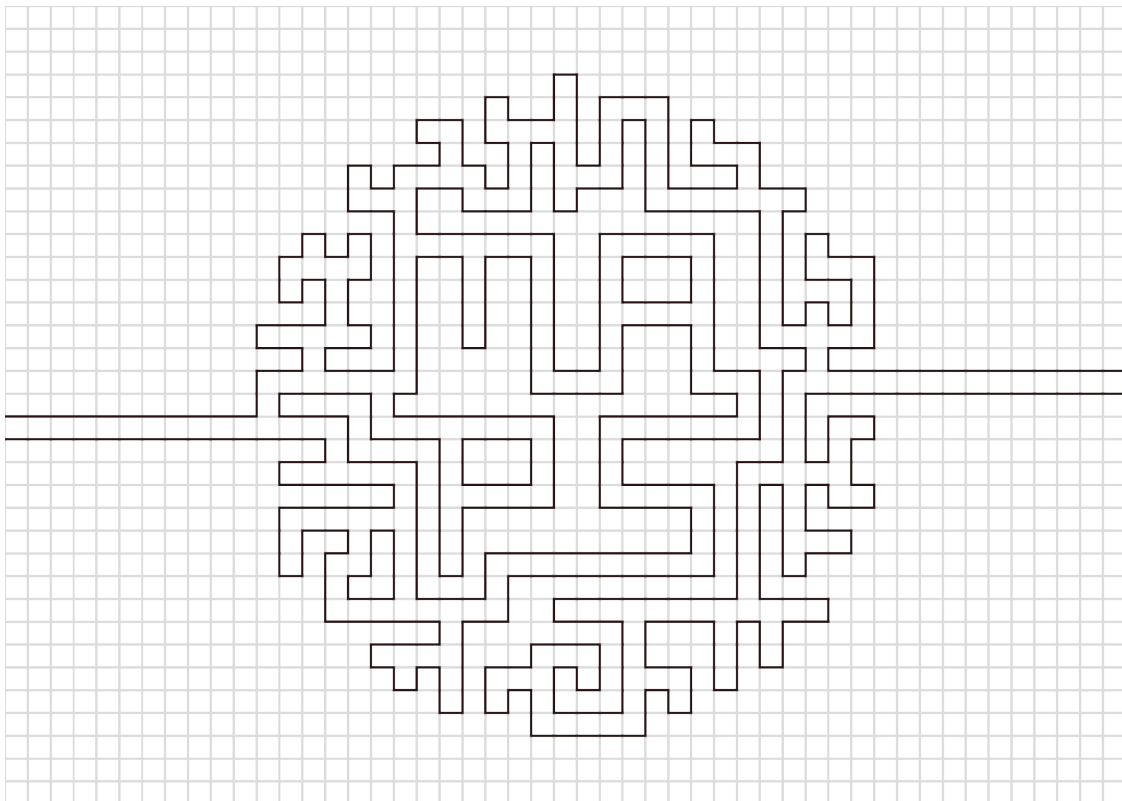
proceeds go to Red Nose Day, a non-profit organization fighting to end child poverty.



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Maps of the Month: Rime of the Frostmaiden and Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl

As we head into the wintry dangers of Icewind Dale, we explore maps of snow and ice.



*WARNING: THESE MAPS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS FOR
ICEWIND DALE: RIME OF THE FROSTMAIDEN, AND
TALES OF THE YAWNING PORTAL.*

ICEWIND DALE

With the release of *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, it's time to plot our expeditions into these rugged, wintry lands. We've

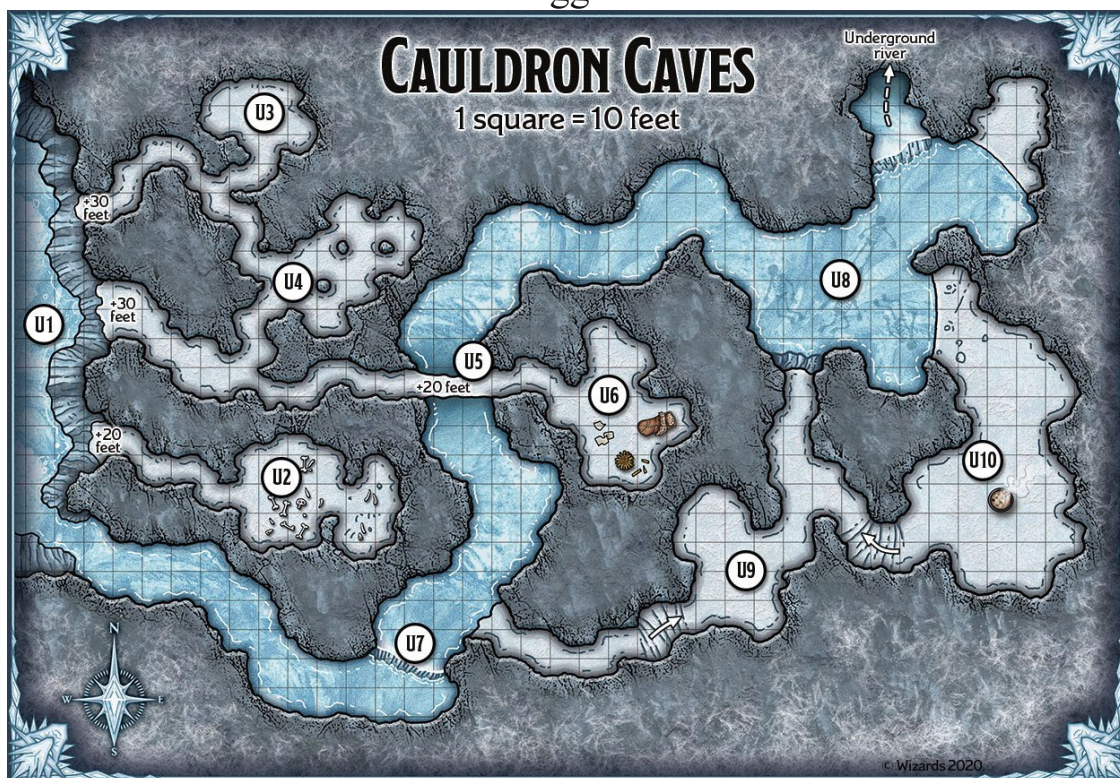
selected several maps to help you run the adventure, as well as untagged versions for use in other icy dungeons you may have planned.

Cauldron Caves

Here we are, in the season of Halloween! How could we possibly ignore this map to a cave network that's home to the lake hag, Maud Chiselbone?

The caves extend into snow-swept cliffs along the shore of Lac Dinneshere, and once contained a sacred hot spring where elderly frost giants came to end their lives in a drowning ritual. Now, the waters have frozen over—and Maud has made the place her home. The hag previously shared the caves with her two sisters, but sadly the coven had a falling out. The bones of Maud's dead sisters are among those on display in her home.

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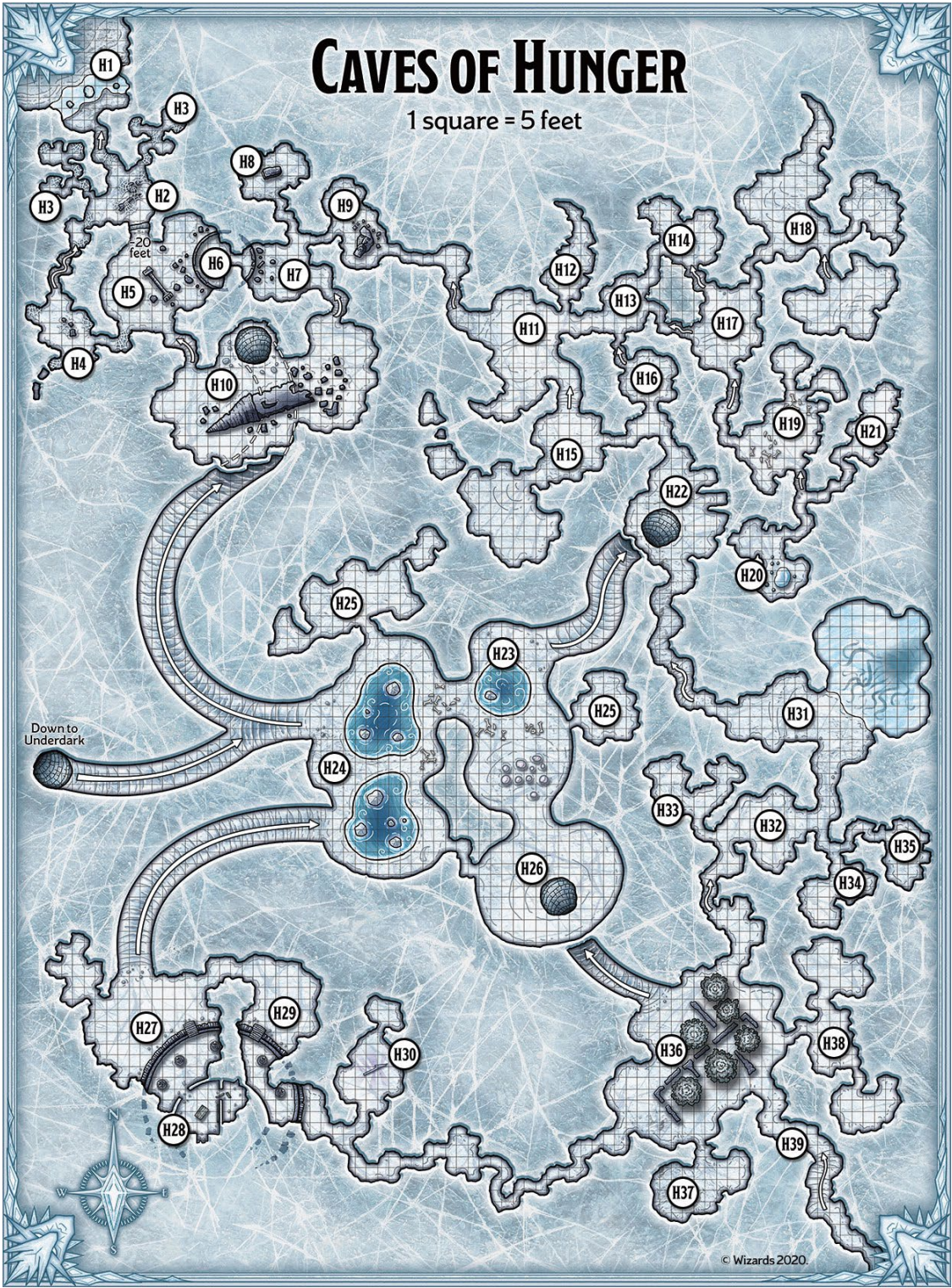
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Caves of Hunger

You may have seen the image at *D&D Live* and *Celebration* of adventures standing before a crack in a glacial wall. What lay within? Now we finally know—the following dungeon that was sealed off by the Frostmaiden long ago, a network of sepulchral ice caves haunted by ravenous beings. Including whatever that thing may be in area H31.

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Frost Giant Ice Lodge

Finally, we come upon a very Icewind Dale-esque home to visit while trick-or-treating. Namely, the lodge of a friendly local frost giant! Just kidding. There's nothing inside but gloom and danger. This is Icewind Dale; there's gloom and danger everywhere here!

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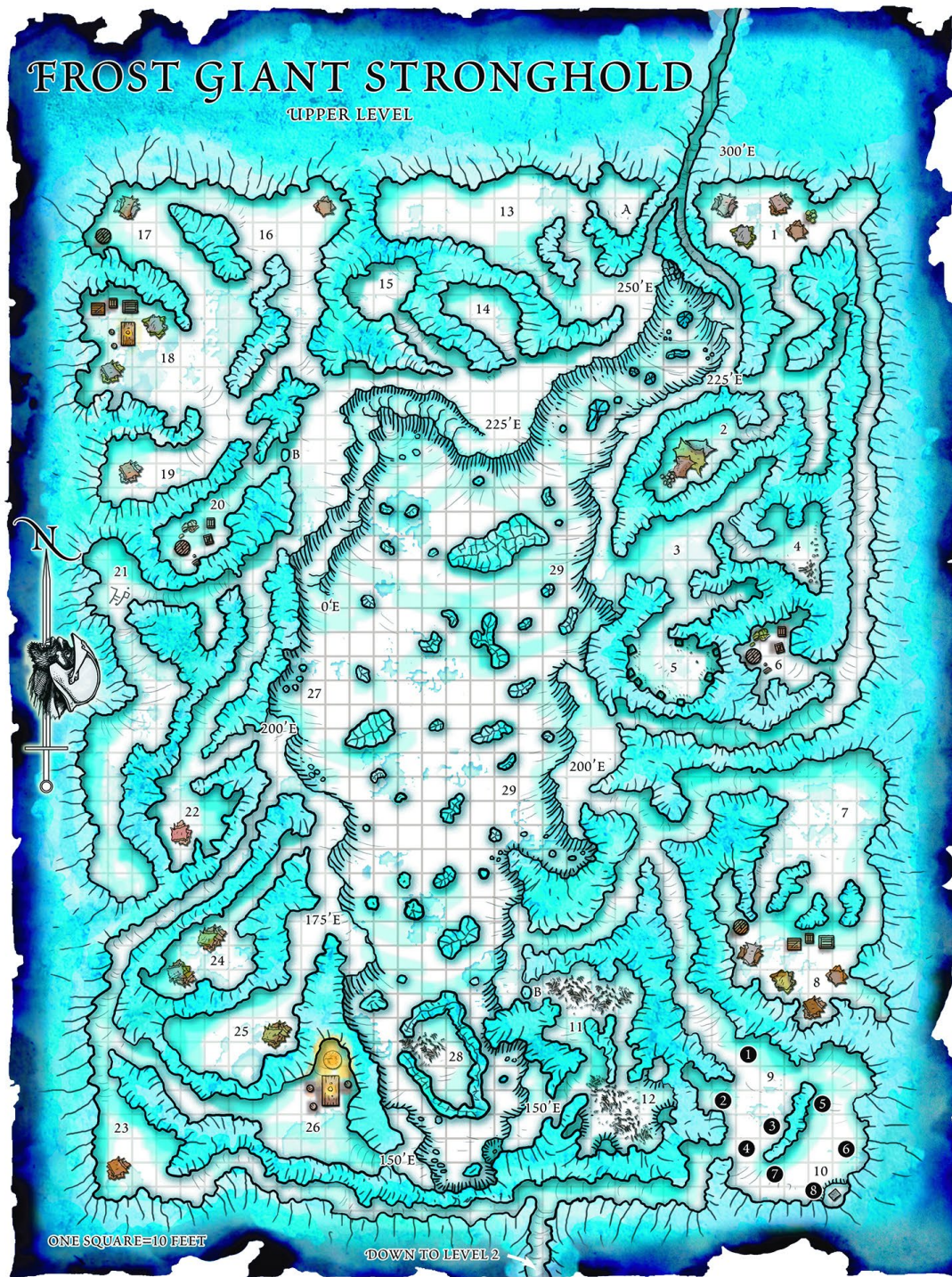
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Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. Order your copy at your [local game store](#), bookstores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#). Also available as a digital version at [D&D Beyond](#), [Fantasy Grounds](#), and [Roll20](#).

EVEN MORE FROST GIANTS!

When it comes to the abode of frost giants, we daren't forget about another famed glacial rift. Namely, the icy fortress of Grugnur, Lord of Frost Giants, featured in *G2: Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl*. Originally part of the *Against the Giants* adventure series, it was later updated for fifth edition in *Tales from the Yawning Portal*.

Level 1



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Level 2

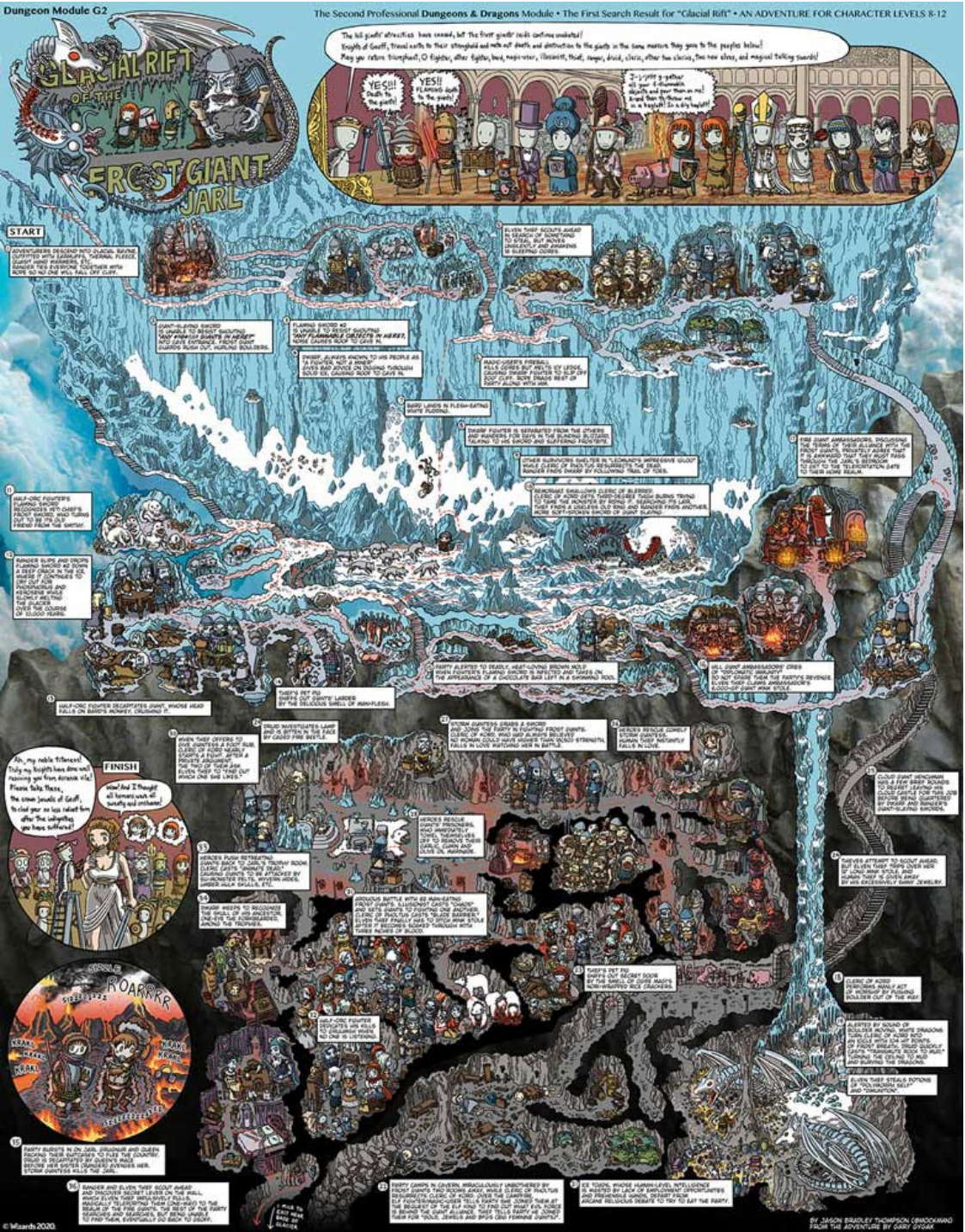


© Wizards 2020.

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Plus, if you missed the original release of Jason Thompson’s cartoon walkthrough map, here’s his version of Grugnur’s glacial rift!



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Tales from the Yawning Portal is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. Order a physical copy at your local game store, book stores such as Barnes & Noble, or online at retailers such as Amazon. Also

available as a digital version at [Fantasy Grounds](#), [Steam](#), [Roll20](#), and [D&D Beyond](#).

CARTOGRAPHERS

As always, our appreciation goes out to our amazing cartographers; for *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, these include Stacey Allan, Will Doyle, and Mike Schley; as well as for this issue, Jason Thompson.



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Dungeon Module G2

The Second Professional Dungeons & Dragons Module • The First Search Result for "Glacial Rift" • AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-12



The hill giants' atrocities have ceased, but the frost giants' raids continue unabated!
Knights of Geoff, travel north to their stronghold and mete out death and destruction to the giants in the same measure they gave to the peoples below!
May you return triumphant, O fighter, other fighter, bard, magic-user, illusionist, thief, ranger, druid, cleric, other two clerics, two new elves, and magical talking swords!



YES!!!
Death to
the giants!

YES!!
FLAMING death
to the giants!

J-just g-gather
all your f-flammable
objects and pour them on me!
A-and then th-throw me
in a hayloft! In a hayloft!

START

1 ADVENTURERS DESCEND INTO GLACIAL RAVINE, OUTFITTED WITH EARMUFFS, THERMAL FLEECE, QUIET HAND WARMS, ETC. RANGER TIES EVERYONE TOGETHER WITH ROPE SO NO ONE WILL FALL OFF CLIFF.

2 GIANT-SLAYING SWORD IS UNABLE TO RESIST SHOUTING "ANY #*%\$% GIANTS IN HERE?" INTO CAVE ENTRANCE. FROST GIANT GUARDS RUSH OUT, HURLING BOULDERS.

3 FLAMING SWORD #2 IS UNABLE TO RESIST SHOUTING "ANY FLAMMABLE OBJECTS IN HERE?" NOISE CAUSES ROOF TO CAVE IN.

4 DWARF, ALWAYS KNOWN TO HIS PEOPLE AS "A FIGHTER, NOT A MINER" GIVES BAD ADVICE ON DIGGING THROUGH SOLID ICE, CAUSING ROOF TO CAVE IN.

5 MAGIC-USER'S FIREBALL KILLS OGRES BUT MELTS ICE LEDGE, CAUSING DWARF FIGHTER TO SLIP OFF 200' CLIFF. ROPE DRAGS REST OF PARTY ALONG WITH HIM.

7 BARD LANDS IN FLESH-EATING WHITE PUDDING.

8 DWARF FIGHTER IS SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS AND WANDERS FOR DAYS IN THE BLINDING BLIZZARD, TALKING TO HIS SWORD AND SUFFERING FROSTBITE.

9 OTHER SURVIVORS SHELTER IN "LEOMUND'S IMPRESSIVE IGLOO" WHILE CLERIC OF PHOLTUS RESURRECTS THE DEAD. RANGER FINDS DWARF BY FOLLOWING TRAIL OF TOES.

17 FIRE GIANT AMBASSADORS, DISCUSSING THE TERMS OF THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE FROST GIANTS, PRIVATELY AGREE THAT IT IS ANKWARD THAT THEY MUST PASS THROUGH THE JARL'S BEDROOM TO GET TO THE TELEPORTATION GATE TO THEIR HOME REALM.

11 HALF-ORC FIGHTER'S FLAMING SWORD RECOGNIZES YETI CHIEF'S FROST SWORD, WHO TURNS OUT TO BE ITS OLD FRIEND FROM THE SMITHY.

12 RANGER SLIPS AND DROPS FLAMING SWORD #2 DOWN A DEEP CRACK IN THE ICE WHERE IT CONTINUES TO CRY OUT FOR PHOSPHORUS AND KEROSENE WHILE SLOWLY MELTING THE GLACIER OVER THE COURSE OF 10,000 YEARS.

10 REMORHAZ SWALLOWS CLERIC OF BLERRED. CLERIC OF KORD GETS THIRD-DEGREE THIGH BURNS TRYING TO TAME THE MONSTER BY RIDING IT. SEARCHING ITS LAIR, THEY FIND A USELESS OLD RING AND RANGER FINDS ANOTHER, MORE SOFT-SPOKEN SWORD OF GIANT SLAYING.

15 PARTY ALERTED TO DEADLY, HEAT-LOVING BROWN MOLD WHEN FIGHTER'S FLAMING SWORD IS INFECTED AND TAKES ON THE APPEARANCE OF A CHOCOLATE BAR LEFT IN A SWIMMING POOL.

16 HILL GIANT AMBASSADORS' CRIES OF "DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY" DO NOT SPARE THEM THE PARTY'S REVENGE. ELVEN THIEF CLAIMS AMBASSADOR'S 6,000-GP GIANT MINK STOLE.

13 HALF-ORC FIGHTER DECAPITATES GIANT, WHOSE HEAD FALLS ON BARD'S MONKEY, CRUSHING IT.

14 THIEF'S PET PIG SNIFFS OUT GIANTS' LARDER BY THE DELICIOUS SMELL OF MAN-FLESH.

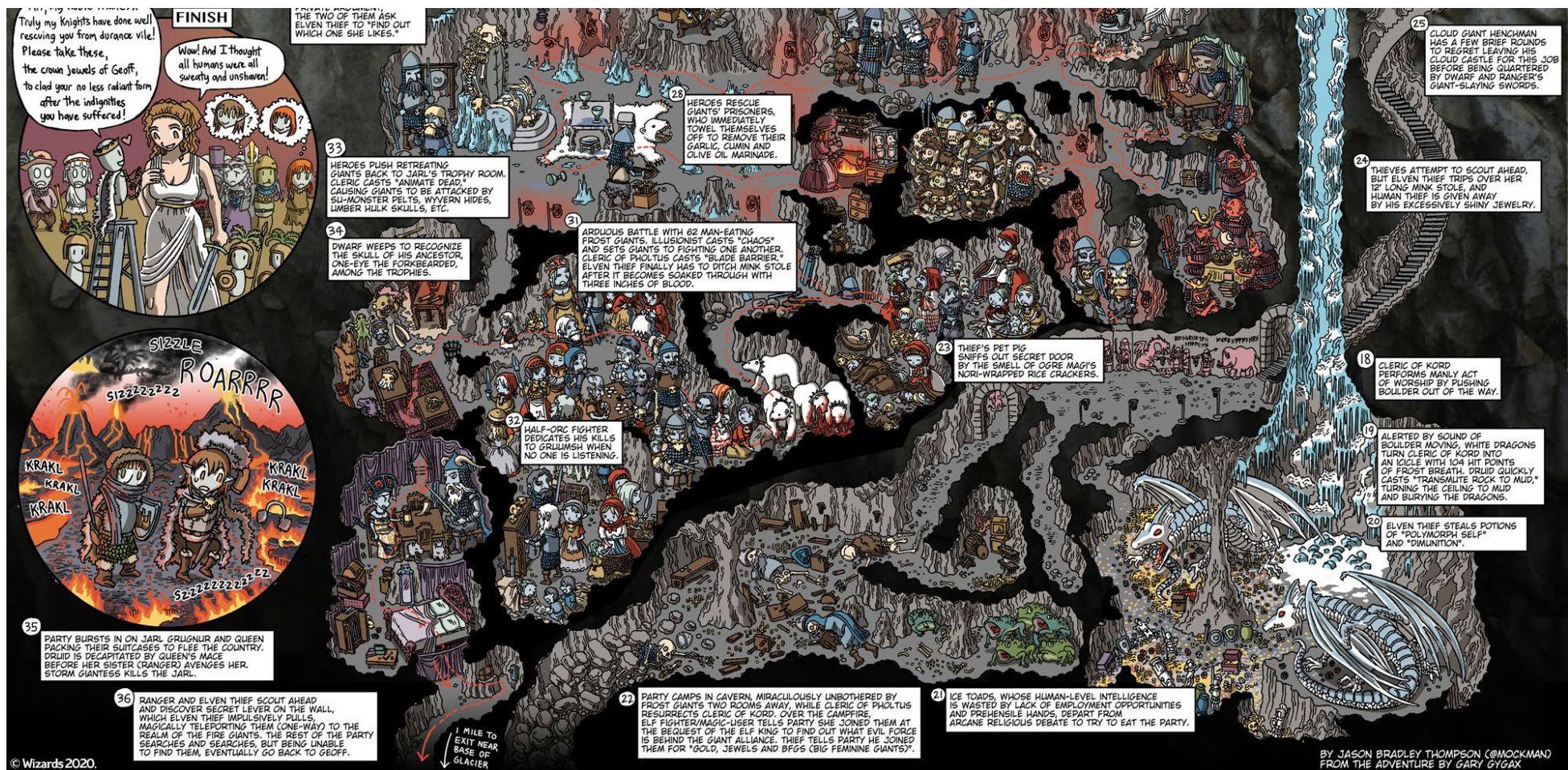
30 WHEN THIEF OFFERS TO GIVE GIANT'S A FOOT RUB, CLERIC OF KORD NEARLY STARTS A FIGHT. AFTER A PRIVATE ADJUDICMENT

29 DRUID INVESTIGATES LAMP AND IS BITTEN IN THE FACE BY CAGED FIRE BEETLE.

27 STORM GIANTNESS GRABS A SWORD AND JOINING PARTY IN FIGHTING FROST GIANTS. CLERIC OF KORD, WHO HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED NO WOMAN COULD HAVE HIGHER THAN 18350" STRENGTH, FALLS IN LOVE WATCHING HER IN BATTLE.

26 HERCES RESCUE COMELY STORM GIANTNESS. HUMAN THIEF INSTANTLY FALLS IN LOVE.

Ah, my noble titanes!





Fiction: Ice Out

Greg Tito treats us to a suitably chilling tale from Icewind Dale.

On these colder, darker nights, we offer the following piece of original fiction from Greg Tito (host of *Dragon Talk*). If the title is any clue, a certain movie involving knives being drawn may have served as initial inspiration. Only, this is a mystery set in the Forgotten Realms—and specifically Icewind Dale—where things really, *really* are not what they seem!



The sky darkened, and I was nowhere near my destination. I had discovered through a series of careful deductions that I'd find who I was looking for in the wilderness east of Ten-Towns. I normally wouldn't follow a quarry so far from Waterdeep, but I had always wanted to travel to Icewind Dale and my target was one I was quite interested in apprehending. Of course, if I had known the region was experiencing some kind of magical weather anomaly—and that the brigands I'd paid good dragons to accompany me would refuse to leave the relative safety of the Bryn Shander inn they're currently inebriated beyond function within—I would have reconsidered.

Still. Darna Fizzbottom is not a gnome that blanches before a challenge.

Blanching before spending a frozen night on her own in the wilderness of Icewind Dale, that's another matter.

I had to find shelter fast. The wind swirled as I looked to the horizon. The fur around my hood was laden with snow that had solidified into ice, weighing it down so visibility was even more difficult. But I dared not take off the hood. With the already meager daylight fading, the sky now shone with a colored light display that mocked my danger with its beauty. I couldn't see much on the horizon other than snow in every direction. I had long left the path behind and my snowshoes had helped me traverse the open tundra, but it had been slow going. Without shelter, I calculated my survival was less than a snowball's chance in Avernus.

Movement caught my eye. A small white hare poked its head out from a drift to my left, perhaps in search of vegetation.

pfffftttTTTT A projectile sped across my field of vision, piercing the hare and spraying red onto the snow behind it.

"Step aside," a voice said behind me. "That's my kill."

A humanoid figure covered in white furs and bleached leathers strode up seemingly out of nowhere. They were around five feet tall, with a bone bow slung across their back. Two other hare carcasses hung from their belt beside a short sword in a sheath. The figure crouched near its quarry and deftly removed the arrow. A feminine face covered with a white paste looked back at me, then quickly returned

to cleaning the hare.

“You are far out from town,” she observed.

“I am.”

“Unless you are a wizard, it is going to be hard for you to survive this night,” she said.

“I was just considering the same thing,” I replied. I decided to venture. “I assumed I’d be able to find shelter, but I’m willing to admit I was wrong.”

“You were. It takes younglings ten years to master surviving out here. You don’t look like you’ve been here a tenday,” she said as she tied her kill to her belt and stood to face me.

“Correct again,” I said quietly. I wasn’t sure how to proceed here. I *was* in need, but some cultures don’t respond well to requests for lodging from outsiders.

“I am Harrow Left-blade,” she said proudly. Her eyes narrowed as she considered me closely. “You do not seem to have evil intent. Just ignorance.”

“Well, that may be the first time someone described Darma Fizzbottom thusly, but, in this specific instance... you are once again correct.”

She reached a decision. “Come. I will bring you to my companions. You will not die from exposure this night.” Harrow turned and began trudging northeast. I followed in her footsteps.



Harrow walked ahead of me, silently. Her tread was extremely light which led me to deduce she was an elf or at least had elven blood. The swirl of the wind increased further as the grey twilight of what passed for day in this cursed land turned to blackness. Harrow didn’t pause, and led me directly into a depression nestled between large weathered stones. The opening had a small amount of smoke rising from it into the aurora above. Harrow whistled a pattern of three notes and led me forward.

At the cave mouth, a swarthy human nodded to Harrow as she led me inside. “Brought more than supper, I see,” he muttered from his mustachioed mouth. I knew he referred to me, but I was suddenly wary that I was just as trapped. “Hope there’s enough. I’m starving.” Harrow ignored him.

Inside was a small cave, generally circular in shape. A single log burned in the center and seated around it was an assortment of characters it surprised me to see gathered here, in the wilds of the Icewind Dale. They looked more suited to the seedier taverns of the Dock Ward.

To my left was another elf, this one sitting beside a staff topped with a transparent gem wrapped in bleached leathers. The pale elven face was oddly contorted, perhaps because she was grimacing as she saw me enter. Next to her was a very large and muscular figure seated on a flat stone, perhaps more than eight feet tall when standing. The goliath, for that is what I guessed he was, regarded me flatly. Three young dwarves were across the small fire from where Harrow and I stood, and they were laughing loudly at their own jests. To my right was seated an armored knight of Tymora, based on the sigil on the shield leaning against his thigh. He laughed with the dwarves, shaking his head, then watched me enter with piercing brown eyes.

Harrow stepped forward with the three hares and fashioned a crude spit for them to roast upon. “Before you ask, this is Darma Fizzbottom. I found her outside and thought maybe she’d rather sleep here with you stinking lot than die the cold death,” she said casually. Harrow pulled back her hood to reveal brown hair and large ears with a rounded point. Half-elf, then.

“Welcome, friend gnome,” said the knight, the firelight brightening his brown complexion. “I am Axios of Arabel, priest of Lady Tymora, and lover of risky moves. But even I wouldn’t venture out in this weather alone!”

The dwarf on the left laughed and slapped his knee. “Did you bring anything to drink at least?” asked the dwarf on the right.

“Sadly, I did not,” I said, looking down at my hands aching from the cold. “I appreciate the kindness of Harrow offering me respite. I overestimated my ability to find shelter while traveling here. Is it

always this bonechillingly cold?” I laughed nervously as I shook out my cloak.

“Watch it!” exclaimed the mustachioed man. “You’re getting snow all over Fluffy!” He rushed from his position at the mouth of the cave to kneel beside a sleeping fox curled up beside a backpack and bedroll.

“Oh be quiet, Sebastien,” said the elf spellcaster. “That fool thing is smarter than all of us and is already snoring.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be watching the door?” said the center dwarf. “You keep letting in more people and we’re going to have to start asking for gold!” The dwarves laughed again.

“What brings you to Icewind Dale?” asked Axios, setting down his shield and beckoning me to sit beside him at the fire.

“I’m looking for someone. I have found several pieces of evidence from which I’ve determined they are attempting to elude capture by coming to Icewind Dale. I think they are living alone out here, only returning to Easthaven for supplies once a month or so,” I said. I was fairly certain they wouldn’t hurt my search, and I was starting to suspect they might even help if I played my cards efficiently.

“So what’d they do? Something right awful, I reckon,” said the dwarf on the left.

“They did,” I said. “What about you? Are you dwarves employed as miners?” I gestured to their picks.

“We’re Barrowdiggers. I’m Gus.” The center dwarf put his right hand on his chest then pointed to his left and then right. “This is Berren, and this is Darren. We make a living carving up the frozen ground to lay the dead to rest in this gods-forsaken land. And when that’s not paying the bills, we make our dungeoneering services available. Got a problem that’s getting bigger? Call the Brothers Barrowdigger.”

“That’s bloody brilliant, Gus,” said Derren. “You’ve never been able to come up with a slogan so poetic before. I thought you were allergic to rhymes!” The dwarves laughed, but Derren did look with concern at his brother.

Axios turned to me. “We asked them to come with us to clear up reports we’d heard of something vicious out near the deposits out east. Yeti probably, or maybe something worse. Duergar, maybe. One of the witnesses mentioned snow golems, but we’re pretty sure she was as drunk as Gus here. Sheriff Markham himself hired us to go out and investigate for a pretty pile of gold.”

“You’re not going to cut her in too, are you?” asked the elf.

“I mean, who knows?” Axios replied. “Are you good in a fight?”

“Not really. I can cut my way out of a tangle and hide in the corner till trouble passes,” I stated. “My talents lie more in making sense of what’s occurred and reporting that to the authorities or people like yourselves. Folks find it easy to underestimate gnomes and that makes my job a lot easier sometimes.”

“She works for those Lord’s Alliance fops,” the elf said, looking down at me with a look icier than the terrain outside.

“I am most certainly not affiliated with any specific agency. I accept the assignments that intrigue me and then I serve my client’s needs to their fullest in uncovering the truth of what happened to their associates or loved ones. For that service, I demand payment,” I replied. “Is that so different from you accepting a task for the Sheriff of Bryn Shander in exchange for some gold?”

At that, she stayed silent. I felt the stalemate, so I decided to press my advantage.

“I’ve told you my name. Who are you and may I ask if I’m correct in guessing you have white dragon blood in your veins?” I asked her.

Her eyes widened almost to bursting. She bolted to her feet, grabbed her staff, and slammed it down perpendicular to the ground. A lace of ice immediately spread from it to where I stood. “Stay your tongue, gnome, before I freeze it in place!”

I took a deep breath. “It wasn’t that difficult to deduce,” I said calmly. “With all due respect, your eyes are colder than a mephit’s soul. Your staff is well-worn and adorned with quartz, but I see no spellbook so I guessed you are able to cast spells innately. There is

also the draconic rune for ice etched in large friendly letters your staff.”

I gestured to the staff she was brandishing towards me. She looked at it, then back at me. “I ... didn’t realize it was so obvious.”

“We all knew,” said Axios. “It’s all right, Tyra. You can sit down.”

“Yes, well, I am sorry,” she said, sitting. “I am Tyra Shaeldin. I don’t know much about my ancestry but, yes, you guessed correctly. I was just gobsmacked you figured it out after only just meeting me.”

“I often have that effect on people,” I replied amiably.

Harrow got up from the fire. “The conies are cooked. Dig in,” she said as she grabbed a leg, sat down cross-legged and tilted her head so she could bite into the meat like a feral carnivore.

The rest of us followed her lead, and the meal passed in silence. I supposed we were all hungry.

“Good meat,” said the goliath in a deep baritone. I looked up inquiringly. His gaze met mine and, I swear to Garl, he nodded.

“So how did a goliath get involved in this endeavor?” I asked.

When the goliath didn’t answer, Axios said, “He was here when we arrived. We asked him if it was all right for us to enter the cave, and he nodded. That’s the first thing I’ve heard him say all night!”

“Complimenting an elf’s cooking,” said Gus Barrowdigger. “Not sure he’s right in the head.”

The two dwarves snickered but the others ignored the comment. The mood had quieted, and with the night getting colder everyone began setting up their bedrolls near the fire. The goliath curled up in the back of the cave.

“I thank you all for your hospitality,” I declared. “You certainly saved this gnome from perishing in a most terrible way. Garl bless you all.”

There were a few grunts of assent and Axios said, “It is our duty to

help those in need.”

Harrow laid her roll beside mine. “You’re welcome, little one,” she said. “May Selûne light your night’s passage.”

There were a few more exhalations of air as we all settled into rest. The wind blew steadily outside the cave mouth. I slept.



Fitful sleep in an unfamiliar place can sometimes feel like a series of thoughts and sensations displayed in your memory like so many illusions. I remembered several of these clearly from that night:

- A loud passing of wind from a dwarf and brief laughter.
- Footsteps as someone lightly walked past me in the cave, and then back again.
- A fox’s small bark.
- A rumble of thunder.
- Clattering as something fell to the hard floor.
- The strong odor of smoke as the fire went out.
- A deep sigh from the back of the cave.
- A critter digging.

Then it was morning, and I was awakened by a loud voice indicating tragedy.



The first thing I knew was that Harrow was dead. All the characters I had met the night before were huddled around the body. The exclamation I heard had come from one of the dwarves, no doubt as they woke up and found the gore. They looked at me as I rose from my bedroll. I tried to gather my wits as quickly as I could from the deep slumber into which I had finally fallen. Something felt off. Perhaps I hadn’t adjusted to sleeping in the cold, perhaps something else was afoot. I shook my head and focused on the horror before me.

Harrow’s limp form lay on the ground, about ten feet from the fire and fifteen feet from where her bedroll laid beside mine. She had a

stab wound above her heart, likely made with a small, sharp blade. A pool of blood was beneath her, now congealed and almost solid from the cold. Her own blade was on the ground beside her body. It was covered in blood.

In my mind, a few details clicked together to form a neat box. I looked up at each of their faces, including the goliath who leaned over them all.

“Harrow Left-Blade has taken her last breath,” said Axios solemnly. “She was a good friend and a calming force in the storm here in the Dale. Harrow, if we can’t raise you, you will be remembered for your valor, your candor, and your unwavering aim. May Tymora bless your fate in this world and the next.”

“What happened to her?” Sebastien said with a crack in his voice. “Did you do this, gnome?”

“Obviously she did,” said Tyra. “It’s the only explanation that makes sense.” She moved her staff in front of her as an obvious threat.

“It is pretty damn suspicious you just showed up out of the blue last night,” Berren said. “What have you got to say for yourself? You one of those Zhent assassins or something?”

I took a breath. “I didn’t —”

“Of course, you’d deny it!” screamed Sebastien. “I’ll gut you!” He rushed forward drawing his rapier as I held my hand up.

Axios stepped in front of Sebastien. “Let’s at least hear her out before passing sentence, Sebastien. Go on, Darma. You didn’t kill Harrow? How do we know that?”

I put down my hand. “I can figure out who was behind this heinous crime. As I told you last night, I am an investigator by trade,” I said. “I find things out. I’ve done it in Waterdeep for decades and various other municipalities along the Sword Coast. If you are truly interested in uncovering who killed Harrow, give me an hour and I will tell you all what I’ve deduced. I already have a working theory.”

“What are you talking about? You think we should just let you live after what you did?” Sebastien said. The point of his rapier was at my

throat even as Axios pushed him back.

“I understand your dismay. I understand the need for someone to answer for their crimes, more than you know. That’s why I’m here in the frozen wastes looking for someone who wronged me,” I said looking to the others. “But please, all I’m asking for is a bit of time and I believe we can then possess a positive determination of what happened to Harrow. And maybe even prevent it from happening again. That’s worth a bit more than my head, isn’t it?”

The import of that point kept them silent for a moment.

“We have a traitor here,” Tyra said. “Or at least someone capable of murder. I don’t really want to go on with any of you lot if we don’t figure out which one of us it was, and fast. Should we give her time, Axios?”



“How do we know she won’t just bugger off?” Gus said.

“You can stay in my presence if you don’t trust me,” I said. “In fact, I’d recommend it, in order to uphold the sanctity of this investigation. All I need to do is ask a few questions and dig around a little to confirm my theory.”

They looked at Axios. “You really think you can figure all this out in just an hour?” he asked me.

“Yes.” My gaze met his.

“Then that’s worth the gamble for me. Fine then. I’ll stay with you. I’m not letting you magic any illusions to weasel your way out of this, but if you can tell us all what happened here, I think we’ll all be grateful.”

“Thank you.”

“Well don’t thank me yet. I may let Sebastien have your head after all,” he said. “Go on then, take your look and let’s get on with this.

The rest of you, see if you can catch something for breakfast. We lost our best hunter, and a good friend. We'll need luck if we're going to survive out here." The group began to move. He looked back at me. "You have a bit of time. Don't make me regret giving it you, Darma Fizzbottom."

"You won't," I said.

Axios nodded without a smile. The rest of the group shuffled out of the cave.



I examined the body a little more closely. The wound wasn't new. Most of the blood wasn't even sticky to the touch. A single blade did this. There weren't any other wounds.

"Killed by her own blade," Axios said. "What's a worse fate than that?"

I moved her body slightly to expose her left arm. There was an arrow in Harrow's fist, held by the fletching as if she was going to shoot it or stab with it. Her bow was strung as well a few feet away. Interesting. It appeared as if Harrow was crouching beside her bedroll right before she was killed.

After a few moments sifting through the fire, I was satisfied my initial assessment was correct, but I still had to eliminate all other possibilities. "I'd like to speak with Sebastien first," I said to Axios.

He relayed my request outside. Luckily, he was still nearby. Sebastien entered the cave with Derren Barrowdigger behind him.

"I'd like to speak to Sebastien without interruption, Derren," I said to the dwarf.

"Get your britches back on, I'm just grabbing some hard tack. Slim pickings for hunting snow bunnies on the slopes this morning, and I'm hungry as a yeti," he grumbled as he moved to his backpack, grabbed it, and walked back out of the cave.

Sebastien hadn't moved from the front of the cave. He was dressed in his brown leathers, and I saw he had recently sharpened his rapier

from how he fingered the hilt. I could tell Sebastien didn't appear comfortable, and it went beyond just being cold. I didn't see the fox anywhere in the cave, and his glances to the empty bedroll were telling.

"Did you lose your fox?" I asked.

"No. Not lost. I think she ran away," Sebastien said softly. "She didn't like me as much as—"

"As Harrow?"

"Yes," he nodded. "Harrow was the one who found her. She brought it back to our camp a few days ago, intending to kill it, I think. It was me who said the fox seemed to like her. Harrow wasn't convinced it wouldn't end up taking food away from us or causing trouble. I guess she was right."

"You can't think the fox did this," I said.

He shook his head. "I just meant I had a bit of dried meat in my pack I was saving for a special occasion. That meat's gone. Same with the fox." He sighed. "Same with Harrow."

"You loved her," I stated.

His eyes met mine for the first time. Sebastien didn't say anything, but his look told me all I needed to know about that.

"What do you think happened to her?" I asked.

"Other than being betrayed by a gnome she brought in from the snow, I'm all out of ideas," he said bitterly. "She was always so careful. So ... confident. I can't believe she's gone. Whatever did this to her had to have tricked her somehow. Like an illusion or some kinda shape-changing monster. It had to be magic. Tyra's or some other foul mage or—"

"Do you think Tyra's involved?" I asked, knowing the answer.

"I didn't say that," he snapped. "Tyra's been with us for a long time. If she had it out for Harrow, she could have done her when we were fighting that blight troll in Luskan. Or pushed her off the deck of the

Hawk's Down. Tyra wouldn't have nursed her back to health like she did all last month if she just meant to kill her out here."

"I see. What's your opinion of the Barrowdiggers?" I asked. "Are they always so blustering?"

He snorted. "Yeah, I suppose they are. I guess the gallows humor is all they've got going for them."

"That's quite funny," I said without laughing. "All right. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"

"I can't think of anything," Sebastien said. His anger melted the longer he stood in the cave. "Do you truly think you know what's happening here? None of it seems right. None of it."

"On that we can agree," I said. "Thank you, Sebastien. Please send Gus Barrowdigger in here next."



"What you need answered, then?" Gus asked as he practically stumbled into the cave.

"Liquor keeps the blood flowing," he explained, pulling out a silver flask and handing it out to me. "Everybody knows that."

I hesitated. And then grabbed it from him to take a swallow. "You're right, Gus," I said, coughing a bit from the taste. "It does help. Somewhat."

"Aye. It does at that," he said.

Axios ambled over. "Mind if I take a swig? This morning is tough."

"I'm plum out, Axios my friend," Gus lied. "This damn gnome must have drank all mine!"

"Tymora has left me, what terrible luck!"

"Go out and grab Berren's flask. Tell him I said to give you a pull," Gus said.

"Gentlemen, may I return to my questions?" I prompted.

Axios turned to me, then back to Gus. “Keep an eye on her for me, Gus. I’ll be right back.” He left the cave.

“So how long have you known Harrow?” I asked.

“Oh, a few years, I suppose,” Gus said. “Axios and this crew have been pottering about Ten-Towns, doing odd jobs for anyone who could pay. You know, the kind of dirty work my brothers and I can’t usually handle on our own.”

“Such as?” I think I had an idea, but I wanted to hear him describe it.

“Well there was that time the fishermen from Lonelywood were convinced there was a wereshark—or was it a sharkwere?—in the lake there. That was a hell of a story they used to tell, with Harrow casting that spell to speak with animals, and talking the big knucklehead down from eating any more men,” he said.

“What can you tell me about Axios of Arabel? They all seem to look to him if anything needs to be decided,” I said.

He took another pull from the flask. “He calls the shots, yeah. It’s usually up to him if they call in outside help like us, so I’ve always tried to stay on his good side if you know what I mean. Doesn’t hurt to get extra work if Axios is in a good mood. It also doesn’t hurt that he’s sweet on our sister!” Gus smiled.

I ignored that. “What do you remember about last night?”

“Well you showed up at our fire, and a newcomer always makes for stimulating conversation,” he drawled.

“The goliath was new to your group too, was he not?”

“Oh yeah, sure, but so was the log in the fire and both had about as much to say of interest.”

“A lone individual waiting in a cave like this on the exact night you happened to be walking by on an errand,” I proposed to him.

“Doesn’t that strike you as something worth considering?”

He paused. “Come to think of it, that is a mighty odd coincidence. You reckon he killed Harrow then?”

“Perhaps,” I demurred. “Perhaps he was just in the absolute wrong place at exactly the right time.”

“Eh?”

“Thank you. That will be all. I’ll speak to the goliath next please, if you would be so kind as to mention it to him.”

“That’s it then? You don’t even want to ask what I heard in my sleep last night? It’s probably the only clue you’ll need to figure out this whole caper. It might even be the key to solving this whole thing.” His laughter was disarming, I gave him that.

“Very well. What did you hear in your sleep last night?”

“Nothing.” Then he farted and walked out of the cave.



Goliaths are giant-kin. They are perhaps as opposite to my people as can be, so it’s no wonder I haven’t had much contact with them in the cities to the south. I gathered from folks in Ten-Towns that they see them a bit more often. Representatives from the goliath communities do travel to what counts as civilization here for supplies they can’t gather or manufacture on their own. The large folk are always so taciturn, I was told, so the reticence of the extremely tall person who entered the cave for my last interview wasn’t that surprising.

But, Garl damn it, he was still unnerving.

The goliath re-entered the cave with Axios behind him. The goliath stooped low and sat down slowly while Axios sat a few feet away. The goliath looked at me with sad, dark brown eyes. His bald head had scars that almost looked like claw marks, but it was hard to tell from this distance. The two of us staring at each other—one small, one very large—must



have been a striking image for Axios to observe.

I had to break the silence. “What is your name?” I asked without any expectation he would answer. He was quiet for an uncomfortable amount of time until he suddenly spoke seemingly without drawing much breath.

“I was called Orilothal,” he said. The goliath’s voice was a deep bass rumble, more felt than heard.

Axios grunted. “I’ll be damned. He can talk.”

I kept my attention on the goliath. “You were called that? Not anymore?”

“It has been a long time since anyone called me any name,” he said.

“I see. You have been separated from your people. Were you exiled?”

There was a long pause. “I cannot return.”

“Why is that?”

“Destiny demands I wander,” Orilothal said. He didn’t elaborate.

“What was your purpose in this cave last night?” I asked.

He hesitated. “I had no purpose other than shelter. But when you smallfolk began to arrive, I wondered if there was a task for me to perform.”

“And what might that be? The murder of a half-elf hunter?” I asked.

“No,” Orilothal said.

I narrowed my eyes but his face gave no indication of emotion or tension. I decided to change the subject.

“Are you of the Skytower or Wyrmdoom clan?”

“My people called themselves Akannathi,” he said. “From Skytower Shelter.”

“And do Akannathi ever conspire with dragons?” I asked.

“No.”

“Not even to get back at those pesky Wyrmdooms?”

“No.”

“Must be frustrating for dragon-slayers to have their rival clan work with their enemies?”

“The naming of the Wyrmdoom Clan is more of an honorific than a description of their activities,” he rumbled.

“I see,” I murmured. “Who do you think killed Harrow?”

“I think you know,” said Orilothal with a slight nod of his head.

“Something else was in this cave last night. Do you have any guesses as to what that might be?”

Axios stared over at me as well, curious.

“I do.”

“The footsteps were very quiet. Almost as if made by something extremely small,” he said. “There’s only one type of creature of which I’m aware that would be able to change its size so dramatically and perhaps induce criminal behaviors in others.”

Orilothal looked at me. Axios said, “Wait, what creature? Do you mean the fox?”

I looked up at Orilothal. “You’ll assist me with the others then?” I trusted him more now than when the interview began.

“Yes.”

“Very well. Let’s get this over with!” I clapped my knee and stood up. “Axios, you can bring everyone in now.”



“Thank you for giving me the time necessary to understand clearly what occurred last night. It has been a difficult morning. It is never

easy to say goodbye to a friend. I hope I can give you some closure. Meaning, I can now tell you exactly what happened last night.”

They were all seated in roughly the same position around the fire as they were last night. Harrow’s body had been moved and wrapped in extra hides Orilothal had with him. The arctic fox was gone. The three Barrowdiggers, Axios of Arabel, Sebastien, Tyra, and the goliath all looked at me in anticipation. I cleared my throat.

“Usually when a murder occurs among an isolated group like this, my first thought is to suspect betrayal from within. I apologize if this is uncomfortable to hear, but I assumed that was the case here. There were so many possibilities that I needed to look through each one in turn.

“Sebastien,” I said clearly. His handsome face looked at mine with pain in his eyes. “You could have killed Harrow since you obviously had a connection to her. You were taking care of the fox to try to impress her simply because she remarked at how much she admired the creature. Harrow was a very special person to you, wasn’t she?”

“Yes,” he whispered.

“But she didn’t return your affections, did she?” He shook his head sadly. “She didn’t like you keeping the fox. She didn’t seem to want to have anything to do with you romantically at all. Unrequited love happens all the time, however, but I don’t see that as a motive here for murder. You seem more sorrowful for your loss than regretful for what you’ve done. And if you did awaken in the night to confront her, one of us likely would have heard discussions or arguments between you. No, the crime simply occurred too stealthily for me to consider Sebastien the murderer.”

He looked down at the ground before him. I went on.

“Tyra Shaeldin,” I said. Her fierce, wide eyes turned from observing Sebastien and snapped on me. “You were extremely unpleasant to me last night. There is certainly a cold fire of hatred and anger burning in your soul. Of all the members of this group, you appeared to me as the most likely to commit murder in cold blood.”

“Why you little—” she sputtered.

I raised my hand. “Hold your thought,” I interrupted. “I was about to say that my quick assessment was not entirely accurate. Your anger is too generalized, honestly, to be directed at any one individual. You hate everyone equally. And while you are clearly a fierce fighter, you guard your companions’ well-being just as fiercely. You healed Harrow recently. I might even posit to say that Harrow was important to you, too. Perhaps even a confidante. You might have killed her to make sure she kept your secrets safe.”

Tyra drew a quick breath to speak but I cut her off again. “But no, you were in a deep trance last night and didn’t even react when your staff was knocked over clattering to the ground.” She exhaled, still glaring at me. “I don’t believe you murdered Harrow.

“Axios of Arabel,” I said. The knight looked at me, the mirth I saw behind his eyes last night was gone. “You are an amiable fellow, and you are respected by your friends and peers. Even the dwarves like you, but I suspect that has more to do with the gold they make off your exploits than anything else. There is, however, the matter with you and Edna Barrowdigger.”

“What?” he said quickly. “How did you know about that? Gus! What the Nine Hells is wrong with you?”

“I might ask you the same question, laddie,” Gus roared. “Edna hasn’t taken a bath since Marpenoth! What is wrong with your nose?”

I ignored them. “No matter. Your choice in personal relationships, Axios, doesn’t appear to have any bearing on what happened to Harrow.”

“Well thanks for making sure everyone knew,” he spat at me. I couldn’t help but smirk at him coyly.

“That brings us to our lovely friends, the Barrowdiggers,” I continued. I tried to bring my high-pitched voice a little lower in octave. “Derren, Berren, and Gus. The three of you are rude mechanical gits. Bluster and biting comments are a tough exterior that hides the fact you are cold, starving, and downright scared about whether you are going to make it through this eternal winter. That desperation and vulnerability can sometimes manifest as rough

humor, and an unquenchable thirst.”

“You’re damn right!” the dwarves exclaimed.

“If put in a life-or-death situation, I’m sure you may have been able to murder someone or something. That’s why you are brought along by Axios in the first place! I’ve seen no evidence, however, to suggest you moved off your bedrolls last night.”

Sebastien stuck out a thumb pointing to Orilothal said, “What about the goliath?”

“Part goliath,” I corrected. “He’s a lycanthrope. Part-goliath, part werebear. Borne by Oyminartok, according to the legend I heard in Bryn Shander. His name is Orilothal. And no more evil than the Morninglord himself.”

The goliath nodded. “It is true,” he said. “I have no ill will towards any of you. In fact, I am going to help you.”

Orilothal stood and took a deep breath. He took off his furs to reveal a bare, grey chest with a carpet of curly white hair. His muscles pulled and stretched as he spread his arms and threw back his head. The fur grew thick and spread across his torso. Orilothal the goliath was no more as he grew to twelve feet high, now a huge polar bear with fearsome claws where his stretched hands had been.

There was a cry of alarm from the group. They were already on edge, but seeing a goliath turn into a very large bear pushed them over into full readiness.

With two thuds as oversized paws hit the ground, the bear leaned on its front haunches and waved its snout in front of them all. Eyes piercing, nostrils flaring, Orilothal the polar bear was searching intently for prey.

Sebastien grabbed his rapier, Tyra her staff. The dwarves looked in all directions as Axios created a veritable mist cloud around himself huffing and puffing the cold air.

“Have they come already?” I said in a calm voice. Orilothal did not respond and continued to growl. The bear’s snout was unnervingly similar to the goliath’s features.

“Has who come?” Derren barked.

“When I had ruled out all of you as Harrow’s murderer,” I said as they scanned around, “I had to consider more fanciful scenarios. We do live in strange times, as you know. I thought about the fox. I’m sure you are all aware and have even fought beside druids who can change their shape at will, not unlike how our bear friend just did. I’ve heard rumors in Ten-Towns already of shape-changing spellcasters causing trouble in the name of whatever being is bringing us the cold. Casting spells on animals. Changing into wolves to chase away the livestock. It wouldn’t be too far-fetched to believe one of them was masquerading as an arctic fox in order to sneak up on your group before you could do whatever it is the Sheriff wanted.”

“Wait, you think Fluffy was an evil druid?” asked Sebastien, incredulously.

“I do not. I’m just merely stating all possibilities, however ridiculous,” I returned. “That poor fox just wanted your fire for the night and the jerky from your pack. It’s long gone and happy to be rid of you.”

At that moment, a gust of wind briskly blew into the cave mouth. It was wickedly strong, unnaturally so, and everyone braced themselves against it. If there was a weapon still in its sheath, it popped out now. The Gravediggers held their picks at the ready, their wide, bloodshot eyes searching about. Tyra and Sebastien were both ready to strike. I wasn’t sure where they would attack—at myself, at the were-bear, even at one another....

I kept going:

“Then I wondered about the fire itself. We’ve all read Volo’s stories about creatures that can change their shape into any mundane object you might find in a dungeon. Crafty little buggers. Their whole life is a trick. There wasn’t anything big enough to be a mimic in this cave, I thought at first, until I considered the log burning in front of us the whole time!” During that last bit, I’ll admit, my high-pitched voice was a veritable squeak.

The wind kept blowing strongly. I couldn’t stop talking.

“It could have used magic to avoid burning too badly, whether from a potion or a powerful ring,” I continued. “And then just when the fire went out, it’d be ready to strike! Poor Harrow might have just woken up to pee at the wrong time.”

“Something just ran past me!” Gus yelled.

Axios took charge, issuing commands: “Eyes open! We don’t know what’s coming at us here.”

“Well, I do,” I said.

“Blessed Bahamut, tell us then!” Tyra’s staff was moving in a sweep in front of her.

“Of course, it wasn’t a mimic who drank a fire protection potion who killed Harrow last night. That too, would be ridiculous. Plus, I checked the log this morning and it really was just a piece of wood. No,” I said. “I questioned Gus Barrowdigger because I wanted to eliminate the possibility that he was actually a doppelganger. His brother Derren remarked that something was off about him last night and, as I’ve learned in my vast experience with doppelgangers, any doubt in a family member or close friend, no matter how small, can be an indication they’ve been replaced. Thankfully, you were just drunk, Gus.”

“Shut up! I can’t focus,” he muttered trying to quietly take out his flask and take another swig while holding his warpick against his chest. Orilothal roared and stalked around.

Sebastien was stabbing his rapier in different directions. “There!” he yelled. “Did you see that kick of snow just there!” He stabbed again. “Kyra, can you see *anything* invisible?”

“For the last time, I don’t know that magic. I’m into frosty things, remember!” Her left hand grew icy and she waved it in front of her.

“Easy,” Axios said. “Keep alert, everyone! And Darma, you better stay behind us if you want to stay alive. I wouldn’t want you to gamble your life away.” He put his hand on my shoulder protectively. I hate that.

“So then I really only had one possibility left,” I said, ignoring him. “And Elminster’s Razor tells us the only remaining possibility, no matter how incredible, how completely unthinkable, must be true.”

I looked over at Orilothal. I was nervous. He nodded. I bit my lip.

“I killed Harrow Left-Blade,” I announced.

They all stopped and stared at me.

Quietly, I raised Harrow’s blade with my left hand. It was still covered in her blood.

The polar bear roared and charged towards me. I spun backwards to my right and, while falling and twisting, I threw the blade forward. Orilothal’s bear claw swiped down viciously and struck ... nothing.

At the same moment, the blade I’d thrown stopped in mid-air. Suspended in front of the snarling bear.

A scream echoed both within the cave and in our minds. A desperate cry of pain and anger seared into us... and stopped.

Held in the bear’s claws, with Harrow’s blade embedded in its eye, was a dwarf with pale grey skin and a long white beard, under which I could see a necklace that looked as if it was made of ice. The polar bear dropped the body to the cold floor.

Its invisibility had ceased along with its life.

“Duergar,” Berren said. He spat.

“What just happened?” Axios yelled. “Is Darna working with the duergar?”

“I knew it! You did kill Harrow!” Sebastien rushed forward as if to attack me, but the bear casually stepped in his way.

Tyra was looking at the duergar’s body. She kicked at the necklace with her toe. “Incredible,” she said.

“You see it now?” I asked her.

“Yes.”

“See what?” asked Gus Barrowdigger.

“A duergar? What? Why’d you just tell us *you* killed her?” The questions poured out of Sebastien. They all looked at me again.

“Explain what’s happening!” Axios said. “And whether we still need to kill you or not?”

I sighed. “I am not working with duergar... at least, not intentionally. But they were the first thing I thought of when you mentioned there’d been duergar sightings near the deposits. They are formidable foes, full of strange mental and magical abilities. If they felt threatened, they would have most certainly sent out a mind master to cover their tracks. This was their assassin, and Harrow was their first quarry. They meant to kill you all, picking you off one at a time before you even made it to the deposits.

“Last night, I think the fox woke Harrow by battling with something tiny in one of the small cave openings leading back to the surface.”

I kicked the duergar. “It was this one, shrunk down to the size of a quickling. Harrow spotted it, and took an arrow out to shoot. But the duergar panicked and psionically reached out to me, seizing command of my body and forcing me to lunge out of my bedroll, grab Harrow’s blade and stab her with it.

“It’s a mighty powerful charm, even for a duergar mind master, but I think it used that enchanted necklace to empower its psionics. It all happened too fast for anyone else to wake up. The duergar must have hid in the tiny tunnel, planning to lie in wait to take out more of you.

“I dropped the blade and fell back to sleep right where I was on my own bedroll. I didn’t know it. But I did it. I killed her.”

I looked up at the bear, who was suddenly a goliath again and putting back on his hides. “I am sorry, little one,” he said. “It is not fair you must carry that burden. I thank you for your honesty.”

Axios came up beside us. “It would have been best if you had told us right away. We would have been more prepared for this attack,” he said kindly. “But I don’t hold you to blame for this. I think we can all agree on that.” Axios looked around at Tyra, Sebastien, Gus, Berren

and then Derren. They all nodded.

“I appreciate that,” I said.

“Just buy us a drink next time you see us in town,” Gus added.

“I will,” I said. “I am pleased to have met you even under these circumstances. I should, however, continue on with my task and you must continue with yours.” I stood, starting to collect my pack.

“When you check out those deposits, you’ll know to stay wary of duergar.”

“And where will you go, Darma Fizzbottom?” Orilothal asked.

I put my cloak on. The fur lined hood surrounded my face and I swung the cloak back so that my small figure was dramatically framed in the bit of light coming through the cave’s mouth.

“I’m going to go find my husband.”



Then I was back trudging through the unbroken snow by myself. The wind blew across the drifts, frozen tendrils cutting through my coat as if it were full of holes. I longed for the warmth of southern climes and to be rid of this ice and wind. This dale was aptly named, and I hated it. The harrowing experience of this morning had put me in a bitter mood. Garl damn my husband for forcing this upon me. Why couldn’t he have gone to Chult on his little escapade like any sensible person would?

I saw a white shape suddenly dart across my path. Arctic foxes are adept at camouflage. Why would it have run from me and spoil its hiding spot? I walked a few more steps and spotted a drop of red on the clean white snow.

The fox was there, looking at me. Was it Fluffy? I struggled to pull a small piece of jerky from my belt pouch with my cold fingers, and then I lifted it up to the arctic fox.

Slowly, tentatively, as if it were favoring one paw, Fluffy moved toward the meat. It stretched its snout and snatched the jerky from my hand and immediately began gnawing with sharp teeth. With Fluffy

distracted, I looked at his hide and spotted the small wound. That shrunken duergar must have sliced Fluffy with a tiny axe last night. I took out some unguent from my pack and rubbed it into the cut. Fluffy seemed to appreciate my ministrations.

“I had you wrong at least,” I admitted to the fox. “You only ran off when you were wounded, defending us.”

“You are kind, little one,” said a voice behind me.

“Orilothal!” I turned “You are stealthier than I thought.”

“I am a hunter in his favored terrain,” he replied.

“Indeed.”

“Perhaps that’s a skill you will require on your search?” he asked.

I put away my supplies and re-slung my pack over my shoulder. I looked back to see his goliath face looking down at me. “I just might. Your company would be appreciated, old man. I was recently shown how my odds of survival aren’t too high out here. At least, not without a guide.”

Orilothal chuckled. He strode forward, and I tried to keep up.

Fluffy yipped and followed on my left.

Greg Tito is a playwright, stand-up comedian, and podcast host who just happens to have a day job as a communications and PR professional for Wizards of the Coast. His short play “*Goodbye New York*” was published in the anthology *Stage This! Vol. 2*, and he produced a short film “*The Barista*” which was presented at the illustrious Wood’s Hole Film Festival, before joining the ranks of video game journalists covering console and PC games for *The Escapist* and *Destructoid* websites. Through it all, his love of fantasy storytelling and D&D was constant, and he still has jaw on the floor walking around the Wizards of the Coast office even after five years of working there. Find him on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) posting pictures of his kids at the beach and playing D&D in their West Seattle home!



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Brandy Camel

Our new introduction to members of the D&D Team and their roles begins with the Community Lead.

One of the most satisfying things about getting to speak to so many people on the D&D Team each issue is how much they're *really* into their roles. Their passion shines through as they describe the projects or



Brandy Camel

campaigns they're currently working on and the energy they radiate could power a small community.

We also know there are a fair number of folks interested in learning more about entering the gaming industry professionally. With that in mind, we'll be chatting with staff members from a diverse set of roles to find out how they came to be valued members of our party and what advice they have for someone looking to follow a similar path. Community Lead Brandy Camel is the first to sit within our *zone of truth*.

Where in Faerûn or the wider multiverse do you hail from?

I was born in Landstuhl, Germany. Being a military brat, it'd be tough to list all the places I've lived and I don't remember much about Landstuhl. But I consider Chicago, Illinois my home. It's where my family hails from and it's where I went to college.

What is your character class?

I'm the Community Lead for Dungeons & Dragons. It covers a great many things and I do a little bit of everything, sort of the bard of communications. But the best way to describe my role is as the ambassador between the D&D internal teams and our fans and players. I parse what the community is talking about and report on it internally, while helping to spread announcements and information out to our community.

What made you want to join this party?

This particular position is a perfect fit for me because I've always been a big Dungeons & Dragons fan! I love expressing myself through games and storytelling, and enjoy hearing those stories from other people even more so.

What character background led to you getting the job?

I've been a community manager for over a decade now, mostly in the video game industry. But looking even further back, I got my start by being active in elements such as D&D Organized Play. I spent years as a volunteer at conventions such as Gen Con for the RPGA and DCI programs. Learning group management and event coordination went a long way, and being active in online communities helped me build the social media skills that are integral to community management today.

What's a typical session like?

My typical day is meetings, meetings, meetings! Being a community manager means needing to be in contact with all kinds of different branches of the company. I work most prevalently with our other communications specialists, planning announcements, events, or future releases. When I'm not doing that, I'm online reading player feedback on Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, Discord... you name it! If it's online and involves D&D, I probably spend a little time there.

Is multiclassing required?

Definitely! I've had to dabble in Photoshop, run livestreams, build presentations, write reports, and parse statistics. There's reading, writing, reporting, and many hours spent making it presentable and easy to understand. I also need to be comfortable with public speaking—everyone needs a “Face” character in the party, and sometimes that's me!

What do you like best about this party role?

My favorite thing is meeting new people but that's been a very different experience in the world we currently find ourselves in. I still get to meet and collaborate with a lot of different people, which is amazing amounts of fun and very rewarding, but I do miss the times when more of that occurred in person.

Have there been any surprise rounds?

Being flexible and adaptable to strange, last-minute situations is part of being a community manager, so I have a lot of experience with it! I did start my interview process prior to the world shutting down, so moving into a new role—in a new state!—without really getting to meet many people face to face has been the most challenging aspect.

Which moments have been worthy of retelling by bards?

I'm really proud of the unique promotions we've done with *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*—specifically an **audio tease** I was given the privilege of voicing! Tasha is a hugely meaningful character in my own D&D journey, and being the one to give her a voice is something I'm going to remember for the rest of my life.

Which figure gives you inspiration?

One of the community managers I was honored to work alongside and look up to is Danielle Vanderlip—she's currently a Community Editor over on *World of Warcraft* at Blizzard, where I was working prior to joining the D&D team. I've been following her journey in community management for years, and her communication and writing skills are something I've always strived to achieve myself.

How can those with an interest in this kind of role level up?

Community management is still a growing and evolving career path, and every company I've been with has handled it a little differently. Be flexible and recognize that the same solution won't work for everything. And when people are upset, remember that they're not upset at you and they're likely just frustrated about a thing that they really love. That degree of understanding and separation is so important in this role, and it took me years to develop the tools I needed to handle that kind of feedback with care and consideration.

Which of your footprints would be visible even under the influence of *pass without trace*?

Quite a few! I mentioned the Tasha tease above, which is literally my voice! But I'd also say the **official D&D Discord**, as it was my first major project at the company and I'm very proud of how open and inclusive that space has been. I'm looking forward to continuing to grow and expand that portion of the community in the future; I'd really like to do more cool things with it!

What's your favorite thing about D&D?

It's so hard to pick just one thing! It's got to be a tie between *Forgotten Realms* and *Greyhawk*—I played the “Living” campaigns for both of those for many years, and that connected mass storytelling is really compelling to me. I've been meaning to delve even more into **Adventurers League** for that reason. Now I just need to find the time!

What's your coolest artifact?

In the years I worked on *Diablo* at Blizzard, I made friends with a really talented cosplayer named Leah Stevo. She didn't have to do this, but whenever she would come to visit, she would craft amazing pieces to share with me! I have a Reaper/Malthael hybrid mask, a Horadric Hamburger, and a recreation of the Black Soulstone that has an LED inside to make it glow. *Diablo* was a huge part of my career journey, and these particular pieces mean a lot to me!



When did you first play D&D?

Two answers! My dad got me into the TSR-era video games on 5.25in floppy disks, so those were really my first experience. *Eye of the Beholder*, *Hillsfar*, and *Menzoberranzan* probably saw the most playtime. Physically in person, though, I started in high school with third edition.

Have you ever become stunned during a TTRPG?

I will never get tired of telling this story: I was playing a half-orc barbarian alongside a group of devout demon slayers—clerics, paladins, and the like. We were defending a city against a siege of demons and entered a section where magic didn't work properly. A group of soldiers were certain that they'd captured a demon impersonating an officer, and had narrowed down the suspect to three people. But they had no way to confirm which was the imposter as they couldn't rely on magic as they normally might.

The rest of the party began arguing about how they'd go about solving the issue, but I knew exactly what to do: my barbarian pulled out her trusty waffle iron and began making breakfast. She snuck holy water into the batter mix and determined that whichever individual refused her food was likely the culprit. Who doesn't love waffles, after all? It worked! I've never been prouder of her problem-solving skills, and it pretty much became a theme with that character. She's much more likely to try and solve problems with her cooking than she is with her sword!

What are your downtime activities?

I play a ton of video games! That's the industry I originally come from, and I really enjoy RPGs, simulators and survival games. Some of my favorite things to play are *Diablo*, *7 Days to Die*, *Story of Seasons*, *Legend of Zelda*, and *Baldur's Gate*. I'm very excited about *Baldur's Gate III*!

Who rolls best for Performance?

There are so many amazing podcasts and streams out there, I wish I could watch them all! I do try to catch *Critical Role* every week, but I also try to tune into *Rivals of Waterdeep* and I've really been enjoying *Nights of Eveningstar*. I desperately need more hours in a day to watch it all.

Which other fandoms or pop-culture phenomena do you follow?

I jump from fandom to fandom depending on what I'm playing or watching. I've been watching the second season of *The Boys* and have been super into the *Fire Emblem* and *Pillars of Eternity* communities as of late. There's always something new to explore, and something new to learn from it!

What further adventures are on the horizon?

Tasha's Cauldron of Everything is the next big thing! There are some fun plans around promoting that book a little differently than we've done in the past. We've also got some cool things planned around Extra Life, specifically a charity auction I recommend people keep an eye out for. I love that we get to do all these amazing things for great causes. I hope people enjoy what we have in store as much as I have in preparing it!

You can hear more from Brandy Camel and connect with her on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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Next Issue: Dragon+ 35

Deck the halls! Expect gifts galore when we return in December...



Our final issue of 2020 comes just ahead of the year's largest gift-giving festivities, and we'll handpick the perfect presents for the roleplayers in your life. From cool dice to hot jewelry, there'll be something for everyone this holiday season. We'll also have plenty of presents of our own to hand out!

The Dragon Friends are teaming up with Australian musical comedy trio Tripod to create an all-new standalone scenario called *Bitten By The Bug* (and if you haven't already played the hilarious Dragon Friends modules based around the Gribbits Detective agency, you can find those [here](#) and [here](#)). We'll also be giving away another module as part of our roundup of the Best of the DMs Guild, to help keep you adventuring throughout the holiday season.

Meanwhile, artist Jason Thompson will don a white beard and red jacket to deliver another highly detailed map. In keeping with the spirit of this snow-swept season, Thompson will provide his uniquely humorous tour of the Ten-Towns as seen in *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*. And in another artistic treat, Samantha Darcy goes from dressing [wizards](#) and [pirates](#) to telling us what the best-dressed inhabitants of Icewind Dale will be wearing in a season that can only be described as endless winter.

There's all this, plus more exclusive previews, all of our regulars such as Streaming Highlights, another delve into the imposing *Dragon* archive, and much, *much* more!

(Contents subject to change)



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**A big thank you to all the staff at Children's
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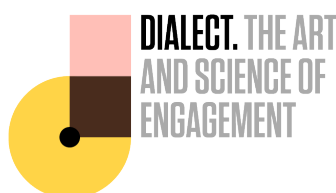
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